

# THE VEDANTA.

ITS DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PERSONALITY.

BY

K. SUNDARARAMA IYER, M.A.

*author of "Vedanta—Its Ethical Aspect,"  
and "Dharma and Life."*



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## PREFATORY NOTE

**T**HIS little book is intended both to establish the Vedantic doctrine of God's Personality and to deal critically with various existing misconceptions regarding it. Though the tone is often controversial the aim of every discussion is constructive—to lead up to a conclusion which will satisfy the human spirit and fortify its instincts of love and piety to the Supreme Being. The author hopes in a later pamphlet to deal fully with the topic of Bhakti and develop to its full extent the positive and practical aspect of man's relations to God.

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# THE VEDANTA

## ITS DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PERSONALITY.

### CHAPTER I.

#### Brahman and Isvara.



HE late Professor Max Muller once spoke of the Vedanta as "the most sublime philosophy and the most satisfying religion." Even a regular teacher and student of philosophy in the West—Prof. J. S. Mackenzie, of University

College, Cardiff—writes in his recent work on "Constructive philosophy":—"The religion that is most nearly akin to a philosophical construction would be that of Brahmanism." This means that the religious side of the Vedanta is not different from, or independent of, its philosophic side and can always be co-ordinated with it by well recog-

nised processes of logical reasoning and spiritual experimentation. The Vedic religion can never be reduced to such straits as are evidently found to attach to such religion as now prevails in the west. A living writer—Mr. F. H. Bradley—says in a recent volume of philosophical essays:—“Exactly how religious truths are to be in the end supplemented and corrected, I would repeat that metaphysics cannot say.” Here is a candid acknowledgment that both western religion and western philosophy are equally unsatisfying, and cannot fulfil the purpose for which alone they exist and are required. Hence it is no surprise to us to know from Professor Mackenzie that “recent theories of the Absolute in our own country—notably those set forth by Green, Caird, Bradley, Bosanquet, McTaggart, and others—have brought us nearer to some of the oriental conceptions.” He also expresses his gratification that “they have on the whole interpreted them in an optimistic sense.” Of Schopenhauer, on the other hand, he says:—“He has adopted in his philosophy many of the leading conceptions of Brahminism. He has however, interpreted them in its most pessimistic sense.” But the truth is that, as Swami Vivekananda has taught, “we begin with a

tremendous pessimism, but end with a cheery optimism." For according to the Vedanta, the one reality—the Brahman—is, in its true and inner nature, the bliss (आनन्द) which is प्रेमास्वाद, the basis of all love and life in the universe. It is ignorance of the truth regarding reality that brings on misery, and all the endeavours of the Vedantin are meant to get rid of the primordial and developing veils—and the bondage and misery of that material existence—which grow out of the ignorance which has overwhelmed us in darkness and death.

The Brahman—or the Absolute—is "the One (reality) without a second" and is not *related* to anything else and therefore; beyond all sensuous perception and intellectual conception. Says the Kena-Upanishad:— "न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वागच्छति नो मनः" "Neither can eyes approach towards That, nor can the tongue approach, nor the mind." Further the same Upanishad says—"तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विदि नेदं यदिद-मुपासते" "know thou that only to be Brahman,—not this (which is known to be associated with matter) that you make the object of your act of worship" Mr. F. H. Bradley—who as we have seen, is regarded by Professor J. S. Mackenzie as an English interpreter of various aspects of Brahmanism—

says:— "The higher reality, so far as I see, must be super-personal." And again:—"The Absolute is related to nothing, and there cannot be a practical relation between it and the finite will." "The Absolute is not God."

The unaided and unenlightened mind of the materialist has hitherto been unable to rise to the conception of the Absolute or Brahman. According to Herbert Spencer, "the only conception is that that in which consciousness inheres is the all-pervading ether." Spencer's Absolute, so called, is at best a bad approach to the Sankhya conception of प्रधान—the undifferentiated, uncaused, and incognoscible matter which is the root of the phenomenal universe. This shows the error of all who identify Spencer's Unknowable with the Brahman (विद् Intelligence) of the Vedanta. Spencer was essentially a Naturalist while at the same time also an Agnostic who held that primordial matter cannot be consciously perceived or realised. The German Naturalist—Haeckel—held the same view, and even more definitely. For with him, the One Absolute is the kinetic world—ether whose mass and energy are eternally conserved and from which the many atomic souls result by an inexplicable process.

of condensation or concentration. Then we have the *Pantheists* who identify the Absolute with the world which comes into existence of itself and by its own internal energy. But this theory can give no explanation of the origin of the immaterial, intelligent *seloes* which human beings are and whose minds stand related to the external world in conscious experience and cannot therefore, be regarded as in any sense *Absolute*.

We have, lastly, the theists in India who speak of an eternally living Personal God or Supreme Spirit—Vishnu or Siva—who is to be worshipped as the creator and director of the mechanism of a pluralistic universe. They cannot speak of him in any wise as Brahman or Absolute Unity, for worship means a reciprocity which can only be based on distinction and relativity, if not also of finiteness.

The qualified non-Dualists—the Visishtadvaitins stand no doubt, in a far higher position, for their doctrine, conceived on the analogy of the human organism, is certainly satisfactory as a practical, working conception of the universe of relative and phenomenal existence. However it has serious defects both as a system of thought and as a system of deliverance from sin and evil. For, in the first



place, there can be no real or *absolute* Unity. The reality—so called—of the Supreme Spirit (Vishnu or Siva) is the same kind as that of the individual spirits and the material world. *Secondly*, the Supreme Spirit stands *related* to the individual spirit in the act of worship and therefore ceases to be absolute, and even becomes an *object* of the worshipper's experiences. No subject can become an object, and *vice versa*—much less the Absolute or Brahman. If such were possible, there can be no deliverance from the bondage of matter. Sri Sankara says convincingly,

“औपनिषदश्च त्वात्मैकत्वाभ्युपगमादेकस्य च विषयाविषयिभावाद्गुणपक्षेर्विकारभेदस्य च वाच्यारम्भणमात्रादश्रवणादिनिर्मोक्षशङ्का स्वप्नेऽपि नोपजायते ।”

“As the follower of the Upanishads accepts (the doctrine of) the One Existence (Atman) only, and as it is contrary to reason to hold that the One can both be the object perceived and the perceiving subject, and also as the varieties of effected objects are declared to be based on mere verbal affirmation, there cannot, even in one's dream, arise the fear of there being no deliverance from the bondage of matter.” In the third place, according to this

doctrine, deliverance from Samsara in its final form is spoken of as *Sayujya*—a union or absorption of the individual spirit with the Supreme Spirit, while at the same time the separateness of the two is maintained. This cannot be conceived except on the analogy of the absorption of a river into the ocean or of a drop of water in a bucket of the same. If the analogy holds good the alleged distinctiveness of the individual spirit becomes more or less shadowy and diluted—so much so that it is not easy to distinguish it from loss of individuality. *Fourthly*, even this condition is reached by a process of spiritual development after reaching the blissful world where the Supreme Spirit resides as His chosen abode. The view that such a journey takes place before the individual spirit reaches the world of eternal bliss brings its own difficulties, if according to the doctrine we hold that the relation of the Supreme Spirit to the individual spirits and the material world constitutes an organism in which the former is the देह (soul) and the latter is देह (body). Sri Sankaracharya points out some of them as follows in a passage shining with humorous satire:—

“आत्मावयवभूतस्य विज्ञानात्मनः संसरणे परमात्मशून्यप्रदेशाभा-  
 दावयवान्तरनोदनव्यूहनाम्नां हृदयशूलेनैव परमात्मनो दुःखित्वप्राप्तिः”

“ During the journey of the intelligent, living soul who forms a limb of the Supreme Spirit, as there is no place where he (the Paramatman) is not, there will be suffering for the Paramatman, arising, as it were, from the heart-aches caused by the mutual impact, and piercing through, of his various limbs.”

Many other conceptions of the Absolute have been put forth, either with the aim of transcending the plurality which all conscious experience presupposes, or as the result of a purely speculative abstraction from hypothetical conceptions of reality,—as for example, an absolute subject, an absolute object, an absolute Ego, an absolute self-consciousness, an absolute experience, and so on. All this is the result of mere riotous speculation. Such speculation often exists for its own sake, and has no relation to any actual human experience or any purpose of practical spiritual attainment. In such aimless speculations, we meet also with the perplexing phenomenon that, as often as there is affirmation of a kind on the part of one writer or thinker, there is a correlative negation of the same on what seems plausible or cogent argumentation. The speculative pendulum swings as often to one side as to the other. In order to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, it is

necessary that we should avoid both the Scylla of relying on mere argumentation and the Charybdis of unreasoning faith, but rely—though as for a start only—on such authority as can offer a fair reconciliation of both reason and faith; while also finally leading to such a *practical* realisation of the goal as brings on the bliss of everlasting deliverance from the recurring pains and penalties of embodied existence. It is such realisation even while here that Sri Sankara calls by the name of *व्यवृत्तिः*. For him it is the highest—the ultimate source of the realisation of Brahman,—and forms the justification of the reliance we place on all the sources, methods and means to which we resort as preliminaries to its attainment. Sri Sankara says in language worth pondering:—

“इति न हि प्रमाणेनावगन्तुमिष्टं यद्वा । यद्वावगतिर्हि गुह्यार्थः निः-  
शेषसंसारबीजविद्यायनर्पनिर्द्वन्द्वः”

“We wish to have a practical realisation of Brahman by knowledge which brings its own proof for us. Such practical realisation is the sole desire of the living soul—for it destroys, without leaving any remnant behind it, the ignorance which is the seed of all embodied existence in this or other worlds.”

can worship, and also the God whom modern thought finds it increasingly difficult to believe in." To this statement the Rev. Aubrey Moore replies:—"If the belief in a personal God is to be called anthropomorphism, religion is hopelessly anthropomorphic,"—and he says further that "So long as philosophy has no room for a personal God, religion must exclude philosophy."

In India at least this mutual conflict of religion and philosophy, or even the alleged "exclusion" of the one by the other, does not exist. In Sri Sankaracharya's Vedanta doctrine, the worshipper of the personal God (ईश्वर) can even here, if he is competent and willing to undertake the endeavour, attain to the realisation of the Impersonal or Absolute Reality,—viz, the innermost Self (अव्यक्तात्मा); and, if he is not competent for the task, he is taken and welcomed into the heavenly world of Brahma, where he secures both the opportunity and the spiritual refinement needed for such self-realisation. Even in regard to this matter of self-realisation, the endeavour of the aspirant does not cease to be *practical* in its aim, though, when its goal is attained, he passes beyond the sphere of differentiation and relativity to the "One (existence) only without a second" which,

previous to such attainment, is only a philosophical postulate or metaphysical concept whose significance is not, fully, or at all, realised by the understanding.

We are at present only concerned with the *religious or personal* idea of God in the Vedanta. This idea is not to be regarded as non-rational or irrational, simply because it is not philosophical, *i. e.* *metaphysical*. The metaphysical, is what *transcends* the physical,—*i. e.* the universe of matter in all its forms, potential or kinetic. The personal God of the Vedanta religion becomes important to man only when we are still concerned with the universe of phenomenal existence in all its recognisable forms. The personal God stands related to the universe as its maker,—and to man, too, as part and parcel of the universe. In fact it is this relation—as it exists, and because it exists—that makes for a personal God. Hegel says truly,—“Without the world, God is not God. If there is no universe, there can be no God.” God is God, because He, in His supreme wisdom, power, and mercy, brings about the manifestation, preservation, and disappearance of the universe, according to the eternal laws which govern these phenomena. As the well-known Upanishadic passage says:—

“यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति । यत्प्रय-  
न्तमसिद्ध्यन्ति ।”

“From whom these created objects and beings are born, through whom they live after being born, unto whom they are withdrawn and finally disappear.” The philosopher, David Hume, says that “where reasonable men treat these subjects, the question can never be concerning the *Being* but only the *Nature* of the Deity.” He also says:— “Nothing exists without a cause, and the original cause of this universe we call God, and piously ascribe to him every species of perfection.” Furthermore, “the curious adapting of means to ends throughout all nature resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance, of human designs, thought, wisdom, intelligence. Since, therefore, the effects resemble each other we are led to infer by all rules of analogy that the causes also resemble and that the Author of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man though possessed of much larger faculties proportioned to the grandeur of the work which he has executed.” The modernised mind would do well to compare with the above extract from Hume the following passage from Sankara-charya’s Bhashya.—

“अस्य जगतो नामरूपाभ्यां व्याकृतस्यानेककर्तृभोक्तृत्युक्तस्य प्रतिनियतदेशकालनिमित्तक्रियाफलाश्रयस्य मनसाप्यचिन्त्यरचनारूपस्य जन्मस्थितिभङ्गं यतः सर्वज्ञात्सर्वशक्तः कारणाद्भवति ।”

“From which all-wise, all-powerful cause has proceeded the manifestation, preservation, and disappearance of this universe, with its evolution of name and form, which has, associated with it, numerous doers and enjoyers, which is the abode of the fruits of activities each having its special place, time, and origin, and whose orderly succession of phenomena is beyond the power of comprehension by the human mind.” In the light of what has been stated so far we see how absurd is Locke’s ridicule of the so-called “fallacy of the poor Indian philosopher, the fallacy of applying to the whole a concept that is applicable only to the part” and of Professor James Ward’s sanction of it when he says that “the absolute totality of being has no cause, it simply is.” The Indian philosopher does *not* hold that the absolute totality of being has a cause, but the entire manifested universe of name and form has a cause,—*viz.*, God. The personal God has, by his control over matter, the qualities of wisdom, power, and grace which enable him to bring about the



manifestation, preservation, and disappearance of the universe of name and form in accordance with the eternal laws of Karma and with a view to bestow the appropriate fruits of Karma on the persons and beings included in the universe. To the one Absolute Reality without a second—the Noumenal Atman or Self—no conception of cause can properly apply, for that will mean the differentiation between cause and effect which directly contradicts the *unity* of the Absolute. The personal God, on the other hand, who is the creator and sustainer of the Universe has all sorts of high and auspicious attributes—not only those of omnipotence and omnipresence (or *omnipenetrativeness*, to use a word of Dr. Miller's coinage), but also those of knowledge, righteousness, justice and grace in perfection. For, only thus is he in a position to judge, reward, and bless all according to their deserts while at the same time he pours his infinite love, mercy, and compassion on all in order to help them to know the truth concerning him so as to free themselves from the bondage of sensuality, sin, and selfishness.

What has been said so far is enough to show the error of the Christian writer (the Rev. Aubrey

Moore) who says that "the function of morality is to purify the religious idea of God." One of the chief functions of religion has been to promote higher morality in men and societies,—and no religion is worth the name which does not perform this function. The sincere worship of God is itself a great purifying force for man.

The blessed Bhagavan says in the Bhagavad Gita (IX. 30, 31):—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।

साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवर्तितो हि सः ॥

क्षिप्रं भवीत धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छीमास्त निगच्छति ।

"Even though he is a man of exceedingly evil conduct, if he worships Me with undivided devotion he must be regarded as a person of superior quality, for his heart's aim is rightly directed. Speedily he becomes righteous-minded, and he acquires freedom from the eager desire for sense-enjoyments." According to the Veda, thus, we learn morality from religion, not vice versa. It is the practical observance of Vedic Dharma that purifies men from evil and renders them qualified for God-realisation and Self-Realisation.

What we have so far said of the nature of the Personal God must be sufficient to settle the question which has arisen,—whether he is *immanent* or *transcendent*. The Christian apologist above mentioned writes:—"Religion demands as the very condition of its existence a God who transcends the universe; philosophy as imperiously requires His immanence in nature." He also says that "the higher the religion the more unreservedly it asserts this immanence as a truth dear to religion itself." In the Vedic religion, we have *both* the immanence and the transcendence of the personal God. The immanence of God in nature is chiefly intended to show that the God who resides in every object of the universe is to be known and can be known in truth. In fact, the manifestation as the universe of the primordial and unmanifested "root of matter" (मूलप्रकृति) is undertaken by God, in accordance with the Karma of all creatures, with the purely gracious object that they should truly realise him and thereby gain the bliss of emancipation from Samsaric bondage. This is explained clearly in the Second Valli (or Chapter) of the Taittiriya Upanishad. This chapter begins with the statement that "he who knows the Brahman obtains the highest".

(नमविदाप्रोति परं) and then explains the process of manifestation of the five great elements and of the body of all living souls and its interior sheaths, and then proceeds to state as follows the fact of his entrance (प्रवेश) into the innermost region of such bodies:— “ओऽकामयत् । बहु एषां प्रजायेयेति । स तपोऽतप्यत् । स तपस्तप्त्वा इदम् सर्वमसृजत् । यदिदं किञ्च । तत्सृष्ट्वा । तदेवानु-  
 ११ प्राविशत् । तदनु प्रविश्य । सर्वं त्यजामवत् ” “He desired, ‘let  
 १२ me become many.’ He then thought a thought ;  
 and having thought the thought, he then brought  
 into manifestation all these objects which now exist.  
 Having brought them into manifestation, he verily  
 entered into them ; and having entered he became  
 both what is fine (सूक्ष्म) and what is gross (स्थूल) in  
 matter.” Sri Sankaracharya explains that “entrance”  
 here spoken of cannot be like a man’s entrance into  
 a house built for him. He says:— “न हि यो बह्वान्तः-  
 स्थः स एव तत्प्रविष्ट उच्यते ” “it cannot be stated that  
 he who is already within (a house) has entered into  
 it (from outside)” “बहिस्तस्य प्रवेशोपपत्तेः” “For him  
 who is outside (a house) entrance within it is pos-  
 sible.” Sri Sankaracharya also says: “ननुसूर्यकादिप्रति-  
 १३ बिम्बप्रवेशः स्यादिति चेन्न । अगतिरिच्छन्तत्वादमूर्तत्वाच्च” “If it is  
 said that entrance is like the reflection in water of  
 an image of the sun, the answer is no, for He (the

Atman) is unlimited, and without form." Sri Sankara concludes by interpreting 'entrance' as follows अस्या-  
मेव गुहायां अभिगन्तव्य इति, तदश्वेष्टः प्रकल्पते "In this cave  
(the human heart), he is to be realised, and this  
is fancifully conceived as his entrance."

While on this question of divine immanence, we must point out the error of the notion commonly entertained in India (and elsewhere) that there are two souls in the human heart,—the individual soul (Jivatman) and the all-pervading or Universal Soul (Paramatman). The following *Katha-Upanishad* passage (I.3.—1) seems to speak of both as "ग्रह-  
प्रविष्टौ" "which have (both) entered into the cave (of the human heart)." The same also seems to be the import of the *Mundaka-Upanishad* passage (III.1.—2) where "द्वावुष्णं वयुषां वसताम्" "two birds which are inseparably united and which have the same quality of lighting up the external world," are referred to. In his *bhashya* on *Saṅkara-Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* (1.2—12) of "अद्वैतब्रह्मणम्", Sri Sankara states it as his final opinion that both these passages should be understood according to the interpretation given of the *Katha-Upanishad* passage by the *Paingī Rahasya-Brahmana* which states that only "सर्वश्रेष्ठं"

“the mind and the knower of the field (*Atman*)” have entered into the human heart,—not two *Atmans*. In accordance with this unquestionable interpretation by a *Sruti*, Sri Sankara gives the following as his own view.—

“इदं हि कर्तृत्वं भोक्तृत्वं च सत्त्वक्षेत्रज्ञयोरितरेतरस्वभावावि-  
वेककृतं करण्यते । परमार्थतस्तु नान्यतरस्यापि संभवति ; अचेतनत्वा-  
त्सत्त्वस्य, अविक्रियत्वाच्च क्षेत्रज्ञस्य” “this (fact of) being a  
doer and enjoyer is only fancifully put forth as due  
to the want of discriminative knowledge, by the  
mind and the knower of the body (*atman*), of each  
other's nature. In truth it cannot apply to either,  
for the mind is non-intelligent, and the knower of  
the body (*Kshetrajna*) is without any modification  
or change (*i.e.*, absolute).” Thus we have one *Atman*  
only who appears either as the all-pervading *Isvara*  
or the limited *jiva*, and it is stated to reside in the  
heart. This means, as already explained, that the  
mind of man is the quarter where the one *Atman* is  
to be realised. Sri Sankara also expressly states (in his  
*bhashya* on the *Sutra*, (1. 2.—20) as follows:—  
“एको हि प्रत्यगात्मा भवति, न द्वौ प्रत्यगात्मानौ संभवतः । एकस्यैव  
तु भेदव्यवहार उपाधिकृतः, यथा घटाकाशो महाकाश इति ” “there  
is one interior *Atman* ; it is impossible that there

can be two such; the one only is spoken of differently according to different limiting conditions, just as we speak of the ether in the pot, and the ether which fills all space." Thus we see that it is not reasonable to maintain that there are two souls immanent in the human body.

The idea of divine transcendence is also recognised in the Vedic religion. In the Puranas it assumes a very great importance; in the Vedanta, however, it is *not pressed*. The personal God is usually either Vishnu or Siva, and lives in a world of his own composed of super-refined matter, without any heterogeneous elements entering into its composition, absolutely pure and homogeneous.

The transcendence of God is stated in the Bhagavad-Gita, X. 42 —

विष्टम्याहमिदं कुत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ।

"I remain firmly supporting all this universe with one part (or limb) of mine."

The same idea is also expressed in the Rig-Veda:—"पादोऽस्य विश्वामूतानि । निषादस्यामृतं दिवि"

"The entire world of material phenomena is but a fourth part of him; three-fourths of him are im-

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is one interior *Atman* ; it is impossible that there



can be two such; the one only is spoken of differently according to different limiting conditions, just as we speak of the ether in the pot, and the ether which fills all space." Thus we see that it is not reasonable to maintain that there are two souls immanent in the human body.

The idea of divine transcendence is also recognised in the Vedic religion. In the Puranas it assumes a very great importance; in the Vedānta, however, it is not pressed. The personal God is usually either Vishnu or Siva, and lives in a world of his own composed of super-refined matter, without any heterogeneous elements entering into its composition, absolutely pure and homogeneous.

The transcendence of God is stated in the Bhagavad-Gita, X. 42.—

विष्टम्याद्विद कृत्स्नमेकाशेन स्थितो जगत् ।

"I remain firmly supporting all this universe with one part (or limb) of mine."

The same idea is also expressed in the Rig-Veda:—"पादोऽस्य विश्वामृतानि । त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि"

"The entire world of material phenomena is but a fourth part of him, three-fourths of him are im-

mortal, in the empyrean." These passages clearly assert the transcendence of God. No emphasis, however, is laid on the doctrine in the Upanishads. The doctrine is not pressed, because the aim of the Vedanta is the practical attainment of the ultimate aim of Self-realisation by the qualified disciple who is free from all desire for the sense experiences, however joyous, of the worlds of the Devas or even of the Supreme Personal God. Even in the latter—the world of Vishnu, Siva, &c.,—the worshippers, when they finally reach them, have to live a life more or less pleasurable and not without pain of some kind,—in the presence of their Supreme Lord. Says a well-known verse in the Mahabharata,

इन्द्रलोके महादुःखं प्राजापत्ये तथैव च ।

विष्णुलोके च रुद्रे च दुःखमेव विनास्तः ॥

"In the world of Indra there is much sorrow,—so also in that of Brahma. If we think over the matter, there is only sorrow in the worlds of Vishnu and Rudra." In Sankaracharya's system of Vedanta, the experiences of those who attain to these worlds are placed far below the ineffable bliss of Self-Realisation which is beyond all differentiation of worlds and conditions of existence however pure, ethereal, or refined.

One last question must be dealt with, in order to remove misconception. There are many students of Indian religious philosophy who identify the all-pervading or immanent personal God (Saguna Brahman) of the Vedanta with the totality of the material universe which Western Pantheism, in one of its forms, raises to the dignity of the One Reality or God. No blunder can be more egregious, for this form of Pantheism is nothing but barefaced and insipid Materialism. Even of the higher Pantheism of the west which postulates an *immanent* God, there is one phase or doctrine according to which, as God resides equally in all objects (and persons) in the Universe, no distinctions between good and bad, right and wrong, worthy and unworthy, can exist in nature, and therefore, all such distinctions as are found to prevail can only have their origin in man's habit of regarding all things, persons, and events, not according to their essential character but according to the manner in which they affect his own fate and fortune here. The Vedantin, however, does not hold that the "Omni-penetrativeness" of his Personal God tends towards obliterating all such actual distinctions in the world of phenomena as are due to

Karma and get attached to individual persons as a result of their previous lives somewhere or other in the world. Moreover, in this form of Western pantheism, the transcendence of God has no place. Lastly in Spinoza's Pantheism or Absolute Monism the concepts Substance, God and Nature are co-extensive, and mind and matter are the two distinct though unrelated forms, attributes or qualities of the one Substance. Hence neither mind and matter nor their particular modes or forms can be stated as really existing outside the one substance. Spinoza himself says "God is the immanent, not the external cause of all things." All this may seem to bring his theory somewhat close to the Advaita doctrine. That, however, is a different matter, and requires careful and detailed examination. But Spinoza has no conception at all of a Personal God, corresponding to the Vedantic Saguna Brahman (with which we are now chiefly concerned) perhaps because he held that personality implies limitation, and it is certain that he held that no human qualities can attach to God. In the Vedanta of the Advaitin of the School of Sri Sankaracharya, the personality of God (or Isvara or Saguna Brahman) is associated with the attribute of his perfect

control of Prakriti to which the blessed Bhagavan frequently refers in the Gita, in IV. 6, in IX. 8. and elsewhere. From such unlimited control, we must necessarily conclude that only the highest and most auspicious qualities of all kinds and in their unlimited extent can attach to His Personality.

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## CHAPETR III

### Isvara as Orginator and Lord of the Universe



N India at least, we do not believe in the origination of the world from nothing. "*Ex nihilo nihil fit*" is the view commonly held by almost all our Vedic teachers.

Creation—or rather origination—is with them only a change of form, a change from the finer to grosser form of matter,—from *Prakṛiti* (or primordial and causal matter) to *Vikṛiti* (effected and transformed matter). *Prakṛiti* is one and homogeneous; *Vikṛiti*, or the effected Universe is many and heterogenous.

As originator of the Universe, God, as stated already, is "transeunt," for he acts on it through his omniscient and irresistible power. He is no mere Absolute Existence, but associated with form and limitation,—i.e., he has, of his own grace, taken it

reconciles the ideas of immanence and transcendence. The transcendence of God is unscientific only to those who think that there is no world other than the earth in which we live and move. If the existence of other worlds, finer and more ethereal in their constitution, is conceded—as men of science are sometimes known to do—we do not see why the idea of divine transcendence in some form should not be accepted, too, by the modern mind. The Vedantic reconciliation of the immanence and transcendence of God make it possible even for the modern and scientific mind to believe in a divine causative force (or infinite creative and sustaining will) “which by one eternal act—ever doing never done—determines the evolution and the sustentation of an infinite cosmos.” We shall further deal with this topic when we treat of the “*teleological argument*” to prove the existence and nature of God.

One objection to the Vedic theory of origination is that it is open to the logical fault of a *regressus ad infinitum*. To this our reply is that (1) where a fact is established by an unquestionable Pramana or source of knowledge, no merely logical argumentation against it can be held sustainable. For example, we adduce the analogous case of the

scientific doctrine of evolution. The American Scientific writer, Le Conte says:—"Science, following one line of thought, uncorrected by a wider philosophy, is naturally led towards one extreme,—panthiestic immanence; the devout worshipper, following the wants of his religious nature, is naturally led towards another extreme—anthropomorphic personality. The only rational view is to accept both immanence and personality, even though we cannot clearly reconcile them,—*i.e.*, immanence without pantheism, and personality without anthropomorphism." Further, he says,—“Our own self-conscious personality behind brain phenomena compels us to accept consciousness, will, thought, personality behind nature”—“A God, resident in nature at all times and in all places, directing every event and determining every phenomenon—a God in whom in the literal sense not only we but all things have their being, in whom all things consist, through whom all things exist and without whom there would be and could be nothing.” We have already (in Chapter II) shown that the Vedanta not only reconciles the ideas of immanence and personality while avoiding those of panthiesm and anthropomorphism,—but also



perative of the moral sense; and moreover, in a way quite independent, by the aspect of nature, which seems to answer to our questionings with an intelligence akin to our own." Clifford's allusion, in this last extract, to the "categorical imperative of the moral sense" may be taken as at least something *analogous* to our Indian doctrine of divine dispensation according to the Karma of living souls. There is no alternative hypothesis to account for the facts, or at least no purely mechanical or materialistic theory which we can regard as adequate for the purpose in view.

A *third* objection to the theory of creation is that, if the universe of name and form is derived from a finer condition of matter preceding it, the latter is its cause, not God. To this the reply is that both are alike dependent on Isvara's will for their existence and changes of form, and so both have God for cause. According to the Vedic doctrine, matter in none of its forms and neither in whole nor in part, can ever have an activity of its own apart from the will of an intelligent Being. Hence it is only the will of an omniscient and all-powerful Isvara that can direct the transformations of matter and the course of the universe.

seed and the tree, each of which is *perceived* to be produced casually from the other in endless succession, and yet we cannot object to it on the purely logical ground of a *regressus ad infinitum*. The Vedantist says, न हि दृष्टेऽनुपपन्नं नाम । “An unquestionable fact of sense-experience cannot be stultified on the ground that it is not consistent with reasoning.”

(2) We learn also from the Vedic religion that Isvara has primordial matter under his control, and he graciously makes it successively go into manifestation and non-manifestation, because he wishes to give all living souls the opportunity of gaining redemption from the bondage of *samsara* by giving them forms or bodies suited to their Karmas.

Another objection to this Vedic theory is that science neither supports the world's origination from primordial matter nor the doctrine of Karma adduced in support of it. This objection does not hold. Huxley says:—“I find no difficulty in imagining that, at some former period, this universe was not in existence; and that it made its appearance in consequence of the volition of some pre-existent Being.” The late Professor W. K. Clifford says:—“The idea of an external conscious being is unavoidably suggested, as it seems to me, by the categorical im-

period for which the Universe of name and form lasts. Each soul is identical with Brahman in its essential nature. Only the ignorance in which it is immersed prevents it from realising its unity as the Absolute Existence. Such realisation (*Jnana*) leads to what is known as *साल्पन्तिकप्रलय* (final dissolution of the Universe) as distinguished from *स्वामाधिकप्रलय* (the dissolution of names and forms into the primal form of matter). Such final dissolution as we speak of refers to the individual mind with which the one Atman (or Absolute) becomes associated through Ignorance (*Avidya*) during the time when the Universe of name and form as known to us lasts and till the time when the realisation of the One Atman is gained through the grace of a teacher competent and merciful enough to undertake the task of enlightening us. Till such final realisation is obtained the (phenomenal) distinctness of numerous living souls appears to be a postulate of immediate experience which cannot at all be stultified. But it is not impossible to satisfy the thinking mind that such distinctness is purely fictitiously imposed on it. For neither the outgoing knowledge gained by sense-perception nor inference from premises based on such knowledge can have any kind of reference or access to the

A *fourth* objection is that, if Isvara is the cause of the changes of form in the Universe, then such causation must effectuate a change in him. Hence, he becomes, too, a part of the world of phenomena. To this objection, the Vedantist gives a two-fold reply. *First*, Isvara is the *relative* aspect of Brahman or the Absolute Existence. So, there is nothing to frighten us if we have to regard him as included in phenomenal existence. *Secondly*, because the world is dependent on Iswara's will for its existence and purposes, it does not follow that thereby his reality as the one Absolute Existence is affected—for to say that the Absolute is affected or changed involves a contradiction in terms. The Vedantin distinguishes तदस्थितक्षणम् (accidental or non-essential property) from स्वरूपलक्षणम् (substantial or essential property). We are concerned with the former alone when we consider God in his relation to the Universe as its originator, Lord and guide:

In connection with our present topic, we have to point out that all finite and living souls form a part of the Universe, too,—that, at the time of the world's origination, they obtain new bodies and pass through several subsequent re-incarnations during the

quoted—says:—"Our own self-conscious personality behind brain phenomena compels us to accept consciousness, will, thought, personality behind nature,"—the one personality behind nature which is homogeneous, undifferentenced, and therefore one.

We may here appropriately make a brief reference to the traditional proofs in favour of the existence of God—proofs which had much vogue in Europe at a time when men in general implicitly believed in the existence of God and which lost their old value and force when Hume traced the historical development from polytheism to theism, and later Kant showed that human reason was not competent to comprehend the being and attributes of God. The Vedic doctrine has made it clear that the existence and attributes of God in his relation to the Universe rest on a basis not to be shaken by these and other lines of argument once familiar to the thinking minds, in the West. Hence, we can afford to examine these old theistic arguments, solely with a view to see whether they have a value for the purpose for which they were intended.

*First*, we have the *ontological* argument. According to it, whatever thought is consistent with itself, must also necessarily imply its reality—

interior Atman (प्रत्यगात्मन्). Hence, we can also take our stand on the well-known principle of the "Identity of Indiscernibles," and conclude that the distinctness of Jivas is a mere figment of the understanding due to ignorance of the real Self. Our existence as a living individual (*Jivatman*) and the activity of all kinds it implies is not to be confounded with the Self which is identical with the Innermost and Absolute existence which is one only without a second,—for it implies the phenomenal and material not-Self or subject which is entirely different from it.

It is often asked, why cannot the phenomenally distinct souls be a democratic body of equals capable of acting on each other and on the external world for purposes of self-determination and self-adjustment and without owning allegiance to a supreme ruler determining their fates according to eternal laws. This is merely a hypothesis founded on the analogy of democratic human societies in history. To pursue analogies to their extreme limits while engaged in rational and philosophic investigation of truth is certainly not a justifiable procedure,—especially when we can easily put forth analogies to support other views. Le Conte—the American Scientist already

Cosmological proof presupposes the validity of the ontological proof. *Thirdly*, we cannot be sure that the cause we arrive at is the First (or Final) Cause, and that we cannot proceed further in the regressive search after causes. *Fourthly*, how can we arrive, by purely scientific reasoning, at a cause like God who is a Person and possesses all the qualities we ascribe to him? *Finally*, Hume points out that, in a scientific search after causes, we have to base ourselves on a uniform and invariable sequence. But here we have one Universe only, and not a number of them—on which to base our discovery of God.

According to the *third* or *teleological* argument, certain special and marked adaptations in the order of the world reveal a purpose which can only be due to an intelligent and benevolent designer bent on rendering help to man.—To this argument, two objections are usually made. *First*, many organisms have failed to secure the needed adaptations and have not survived in their special environment. *Secondly*, in numerous instances of adaptations, scientific inquiry has shown that the only purpose served has been to contribute to the increase of painful diseases and mortal agonies to others.—In truth, however, such objections fail to take due note of the

i.e., its actual existence—in the objective world, although we may have no experience of it. Further, if a conception is merely confined to thought, it cannot be the highest. For, that which exists both in the understanding and in reality is higher than one confined to the former only. Hence, God as the highest being capable of being conceived by the understanding, is not only an idea, but a reality.—To this argument Hume made the reply that, because we can conceive of something—say, 'an island or lost currency note—excelling all the known specimens of either kind,—we ought not to assume that a perfect island or currency note is actually in existence. So also with God. Moreover, existence is not in itself a necessary factor in *ideal* perfection. Even if it were, we are not justified in passing from *ideal* existence to existence as a *fact*.

*Secondly*, we have the *cosmological* proof. The world—or myself, as a part of it—exists, and its cause is God, for everything has a cause.—This is not a legitimate inference from the universality of the law of causation, for it involves a transition from a contingent, imperfect, and phenomenal world of experience to a perfect, necessary, and Absolute Being as its cause. *Secondly*, it is easy to see that the



stood,—according to which the Universe is conceived as an intelligible order and systematic unity “originated from the intention and design of a supreme reason” (Kant)—should not be understood to denote a fact of history proclaimed to us as having taken place in the divine mind at a particular moment, but a successful realisation or satisfaction of a purpose or will flowing from Isvara’s relation to the Universe as its originator, lord, guide, benefactor and friend, as stated in the Gita. We are thus brought back to the Vedic postulate of *Prayojana*—which is akin to the modern conception of Value—as governing the entire evolution of humanity in this changing world.

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fact that our experience is after all limited, and hence we are not justified in jumping from such seeming failures to a conclusion which upsets the theory or conception of the divine purpose in carrying out the entire scheme of the Universe. The *Vedic* doctrine postulates, *against Hume*, the eternal and continuing purpose and activity of a "creator to whom all things are subject,"—and *against Mill*, one who is not "obliged to adapt himself to conditions independent of his will and to attain his ends by such arrangements as those conditions admitted of." The blessed Bhagavan says in the Gita, (IX-18) as follows:—

गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः कारणं सुहृद् ।

प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम् ॥

He also calls himself the "*Master*" (अध्यक्ष) of matter. Janet says well:—"If it be admitted that matter, obeying necessary laws, must perforce take the form of an organism fit for a certain function, the idea of finality must be sacrificed, and only blind necessity must be admitted." Even the operation of natural selection through the conditions of the environment in order to develop an organ does not eliminate a truly scientific teleology, but only what Huxley calls "the commoner and coarser forms of teleology." The teleological argument, as thus under-

of the finite universe and of the finite intelligences or Jivas forming a part of the same. These Jivas, too, conceive of him (through the Veda) as a Person related to themselves and the universe as the Supreme arbiter of their destiny and as the loving friend and helper who is to raise them to the perfection of bliss which is theirs in essence and in truth. He is not the Noumenal existence which is beyond the unreal flux and manifold of the universe. Being a Person, he can have the will, purpose, and satisfaction arising from his relation of the universe, and not unworthy of it or of himself. The blessed Bhagavan has him self said :—(III. 22, 23)

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं प्रियु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।

मानवाहमवाप्तव्यं वत एव च कर्मणे ॥

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जानु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।

मम वत्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वथा ॥

“There is nothing for me to do in (all) the three worlds, nothing to gain which has not been gained, still I do engage in action. For, should I at any time not be active in (my) endeavours without yielding to sloth, men would follow my example in all manner of ways, O Arjuna”.

Another objection to a divine cosmic purpose is that the evolutionary doctrine of natural selection

## CHAPETR IV

### Isvara's Cosmic Purpose.



F Isvara, as already shown, is the Almighty, all-knowing, and Perfect Lord and source of the Universe, how can he have a purpose to fulfil at all? Purpose implies an act of will which seeks to realise, by effective means and methods, a plan of action calculated to obtain the fulfilment of a desire and the satisfaction thence resulting. Isvara is beyond the region of finiteness and imperfection, and so there is for him no want to satisfy, no difficulties to overcome, nothing worthy of endeavour or attainment in any future, near or remote.

The objection thus put cannot apply to the Vedantic conception of the Personal God. In the Vedanta doctrine as propounded by Sri Sankaracharya, Isvara is a *Divine Person* who is the lord

are evidently explanations of the prevalence of law in the universe which are suggested by these and similar phenomena. The Vedantin denies that an *unintelligent cause* can account for the "orderly arrangement" which we see in the course of events as we see them happen in the universe. The *Brahma-Sutra*, (II. 2—1) says:—'स्वभावमुपपत्तेः' "The orderly arrangement (in the universe) is not (otherwise) to be accounted for." Sri Sankara explains this Sutra to mean two things,—(1) that we do not see in the world that any unintelligent cause is capable of producing, by its own independent working and without the guidance of an intelligent person, an effect which serves the purposes of an intelligent being; (2) that it is not reasonable to suppose that objects in the universe (whether purely external or associated with our bodies) can become productive of the feelings of pleasure, pain, and delusion, for these appear *internal* while the former are not, and it is only the difference in our *Karma vasanas* that make them sources of pleasure, pain, &c. Thus we see that the idea of an "Unconscious purpose" is altogether out of place as an explanation of the order of the universe. Hence the Brahman of the Vedanta is not to be identified with it or with the Will-in-

may be taken as accounting for the gradual and orderly advance towards perfection of all organisms in the conditions in which they are placed. To this the answer is that it only amounts to the assertion in a general way of the prevalence of law and order in the universe, but does not explain it,—does not explain its goal, aim, or value. The good and evil in the world are not distinguishable as such by any inherent attributes existing in their own nature, but are due to man's capacity for sensuous perception developed in accordance with the Karma of past lives. Matter in itself is neither good nor evil, and the life of the senses does not appertain to the soul which reincarnates from birth to birth. Some modern thinkers put forward the hypothesis of an "Unconscious purpose" to explain the prevalence of order in the phenomena of nature. How a mental act can be *purposive*, and yet *unconscious*, is not easy to understand! There are, indeed, various processes or activities in the life of plants, animals, men, and societies which tend towards a definite result, even though they are neither conscious nor purposive. Schopenhauer's will-in-itself or Bergson's Vital Impetus which are said to be known by Intuition, and therefore without consciousness or intelligence

the rest, and hence any injury to, or removal of, any one of the parts will injuriously affect the life of the whole. In all the higher organisms, it is the function of a mind which is incessantly and permanently active to establish an uninterrupted continuity in the cor-relation of the functions of the several parts or organs so as to secure a harmonious and progressive evolution of life, while removing all sources of conflict and disturbance.

The theory of evolution which was first fruitfully applied to the animate world has now been extended to comprise not only the inanimate world—not only, the specific forms of matter, but the conception of matter itself. So long as the old mechanical theory prevailed, matter was conceived as self-existent and imperishable, without beginning or end, occupying (together with ether) infinite and boundless space, in ceaseless motion and producing, through its interminable modifications, all that has been and will be. Thus, everything in the universe can be explained in terms of matter, force, and motion. As Tyndall put it in his famous Belfast address, we can “discern in matter the promise and potency of every form of life.” This theory is now replaced by the theory of Evolution. Evolution is

itself of Schopenhauer or the Vital Impetus of Bergson, for both these are stated to be capable of influencing the order of nature by "unconscious purpose." Brahman, on the other hand is, in its essence, of the Nature of Intelligence or consciousness (*Chit*) and bliss (*Ananda*); moreover it is not different from, but identical with, Iswara or the Personal God who is the omniscient cause of the origin, existence, and dissolution of the universe and, therefore, conscious of its entire course and ultimate destiny.

When, at Isvara's will, the Prakriti (unmanifested matter) which is the primordial centre and source of potential energy becomes Kinetic, the world starts into being and begins its career of change and evolution. Even in a mechanism, we see that a definite result is possible only when the action of each part so influences that of others that there is no conflict between them. The mode of action of each part influences that of others, but continues the same even when there is a change in its position towards others or even if these latter are removed altogether. In an organism, on the other hand, the character and activity of each part or element stands in intimate and inseparable connexion with those of



successive stages of evolution or the reverse.

The same idea of evolution through successive stages of progress and decline meets us when we study the history of human society. Here, too, thought, feeling, and will embody themselves as a common purpose and unifying principle of the life of societies. In all forms of social organisation, individuals identify themselves, more or less completely and consciously, with the general or social will to advance the interests and purposes of the forms of organisation of which they form a part. It is the general will and its manifestations that constitute the rules and traditions of a community. The state, too,—whatever its form or stage or growth—owes its authority to the manner in which it conforms to the character and content of the common will and purpose of society. Furthermore, these principles hold good with society and the state in all their forms and stages of advance. Every individual has the power of response to the common will and purpose as it adjusts itself to the changing world, and this fact alone determines the growth of societies and the transformations undergone by states and constitutions. Through all these transformations and developments, we find, from epoch to epoch and in all stages of growth, a principle

conceived, by biologists, as an unfolding of the embryo step by step, into the nature and final form of a living organism. The idea of evolution is now applied to the material universe and denotes the process by which the mass and energy of the universe have passed from a primeval homogeneous state to their present condition of distribution and heterogeneity and will undergo further changes till some ultimate form of distribution is reached, when there will be a counter-process of dissolution: Herbert Spencer says:—"There is an alternation of Evolution and Dissolution in the totality of things." This is surely implied in the modern scientific conceptions of the conservation of mass and conservation of energy in the universe. Scientists speak, no doubt, of the dissipation or disappearance of energy at times. But this can only mean that energy assumes and persists in a form which is no longer available for work and so not capable of being applied to the purposes of life. The universe, as a whole, is thus *finite*, though it may not be measurable. It is its finiteness that makes it a cosmos, and so ruled by law and order. We find the prevalence of law and uniformity in all the operations of nature, obvious and hidden, and throughout the entire course of its

Value is either an end or a means,—i.e., immediate or mediate. The highest aim and end of life is of the highest value for man, and so its attainment or conservation can alone be accepted as Isvara's cosmic purpose. Is the highest value one which is "ever in the making," or one which is ever present, ever permanent? This is the question of questions in philosophic inquiry. In India, the Vedic religion has ever had to maintain a conflict with those forms of faith according to which the valuable can only maintain itself by a perpetual struggle with the forces of evil. The latter hold that this struggle ever goes on in space and time, and so the valuable can never get into final shape, though it ever tends towards it in the course of evolution. Men can only share in values as the latter evolve, but can never reach or realise the highest value as the final goal of activity. Against these forms of religious faith, the Veda asserts the existence of the innermost Bliss of Love, one and absolute (प्रह्लातात्मन्) as the ever-present reality (निदवस्तु) which we have to realise as the goal of all struggles in this world of chance and change, of all the dualities of good and evil, joy and sorrow, heat and cold, etc. This world of phenomenal change and limitations is real only so long as we do not rise

of synthesis or harmony asserting itself triumphantly against the forces of dissolution, and individual minds enter into wider and deeper relations with one another, and a common purpose asserts itself as the result. But this common purpose is one which, as already stated, varies from age to age in every society, and so we have successive alterations and even sometimes revolutionary changes in the institutions of the society and the state.

The question now for consideration is—how do we reconcile this revelation of flux and reflux, of evolution and involution, of growth or revolution, in the world of nature and in the social world with the idea of a *cosmic purpose* as the goal to which they inevitably tend. The thinkers of to-day who belong to the Pragmatic School hold that the conservation of value is the fundamental truth of all true philosophy and religion. This idea is in India as old as the Veda,—*i.e.*, it is not only as old as the Hindu religion, but as old as the universe itself. Sri Sankaracharya says,—

यत्र प्रयोजनं स्यात्प्रतिपादयति धृतिस्तदेवासी ।

“This Veda propounds as established truth only that which has value (for man).”

It is therefore, necessary that we must pass beyond the cycle of births and rebirths in various worlds to the supreme light and bliss of the Atman beyond all limitations of time and space—beyond all the distinctions of cause and effect, of perceiver and perceived. The blessed Bhagavan represents himself as the Supreme Self of all which is beyond all the limitations of personality in the universe of space and time, of cause and effect, of births and deaths. He is above all the fear and misery which springs from the duality (i.e., variety or *bheda*, in the universe.) “द्वितीयादौ नयं भवति” “Fear springs from that which is second.” In the Vedanta philosophy, the Chitta or mind stuff (which is only matter highly evolved) is the source of all our dual perceptions and of the variety around and without us. When the mind has even the least of its desires gratified, it has a taste, however slight, of the ocean of joy which is the Self. But when it has attained to the highest Samadhi, it is free from all desires or passions,—it is absolutely pure and calm. It has altogether turned away from the world, and then it has the inner vision of Absolute Love and Bliss in all the enchantment of its perfection. This is alone our Self,—the आनन्द (joy) which is the antipodes of the universe already

to the immediate, inner, and intuitive cognition of the noumenal Self which is of the nature of Bliss, one only without a second. The value of this world of *Samsaric* births and deaths lies in its being the scene where we pass through the preliminary processes of probation needed for attaining to the purity of mind चित्तशुद्धि which is essential to such direct cognition of the Self. But, while we are in it, we cannot avoid undergoing innumerable sorrows and troubles and disappointments, and hence we cannot make it the final goal of our life's activity. Hence we read as follows in the Gita (VIII 15, 16):—

मामुपेत्य पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमज्ञातम् ।  
 नाप्नुवन्ति महात्मानः संसिद्धिं परमां गताः ॥  
 आब्रह्मभुवनलोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽजुन ।  
 मामुपेत्य तु ब्रौन्तेऽप्य पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

“The high-souled ones, who have reached the highest perfection, having attained to me, do not have again a life which is transient and the abode of woe. All worlds, O Arjuna, up to the world of Brahma, are transient, and so we have to return from them. But, after attaining to me, there is no further birth (with a body).”

## CHAPTER V.

### The Jivatman's Spiritual Evolution.



ACCORDING to the Vedānta, the evolution of the Jivatman is co-extensive with the evolution of the universe. Both the Jivatman and the material universe have ever changed, but both, too, are the same from moment to moment. There has never

been an entirely torpid mechanism called the universe which at a particular stage of its history developed motion, activity, and life, and still later instinct and the phenomena of intelligence in their numerous gradations as we know them to-day. Change and identity imply each other,—and is true of both the Jivatman and the material universe. It has been well said:—"You are not a succession of different persons, nor is the universe a succession of different universes. You are conscious both of your identity through all changes and of the changes

spoken of as the abode of misery (दुःखालयं). It is the Spiritual Peace and Perfect Joy which is the final goal of all embodied souls now struggling along the roads and tracks of Samsara,—i e., when they have turned away from all sinfulness and worldliness to the self (or Atman) which is *Inward* and *One* (प्रत्यगभिन्न).

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subsequently to reunite them. Consequently it *imagines a self or me*, amorphous and unchanging, on which the psychological states that it has converted into independent entities may be threaded and moved like the different pearls of a necklace, it is simply bound to imagine a thread to keep the pearls together." "In truth this substratum (*i.e.*, self or subject) is not a reality, it is for our consciousness merely a sign intended to remind it perpetually of the artificial character of the operation by which attention sets one state side by side with another, where really there is continuity unfolding itself." But if the self (the subject) is unreal, then its faculty of attention and the states to which the attention is directed are equally unreal, and hence there can, in truth, be no reality, either in the making, or made.

We know (from the discussion in the previous chapter) what Isvara's purpose is in the evolution of the universe, *viz.*, the Jivatman's realisation of his identity with the Atman as the one reality which is the innermost Bliss of Love. Though the Jivatman is, in essence and truth free from the trammels of life in the world of matter, his ignorance of the truth has involved him in a succession of births and rebirths which has made him, as it were, an inseparable part

through which you go. The universe also is identical through all its changes." Sri Sankaracharya says:—"If everything known as 'this is only that' is momentary and changing,—and if, for that knowledge of momentariness, another (previous) knowledge (of momentariness) is needed,—and if for this latter also another such knowledge is needed we have (the logical fault of) *regressus ad infinitum* (अनन्त्या). Against this view, M. Bergson offers his philosophy of change. He says:—"There are changes but no things which change,—changes require no substratum or substance. There are movements, but not therefore unchanging objects which move,—a movement does not presuppose a moving thing." These allegations are made both of the self and of the material universe. For Bergson, as for other pragmatists, "reality is in the making,"—not a "thing made," a permanent thing. At the same time he holds that "it is our self which endures." But duration for him is only "a survival of the past into present," and does not mean that which persists amidst all the changes known as past, present, and future. Hence he says:—"As our attention has artificially distinguished and separated the states (of the mind), it is by an artificial bond that it is obliged

to pause and reflect upon the nature of the actions to be made from them. However much science and its practical applications may develop, we must not fail to wisely estimate their value and bearing on the nature of the universe and on man's ideals, and destiny.

It is only recently that the attention of thinkers and investigators has been turned to such verifiable facts as the anomaly in the motion of the planet mercury (shown not to fit into Newton's gravitational theory) and the deflection of light near the sun observed during a recent solar eclipse. They have resulted in the interesting speculations of Einstein, a German thinker, estimating the true significance of time, and its combination with space so as to form the order of nature into one four-dimensional continuum consisting of "a single order of time and a three-fold order of space." The separation of time and space, however, is—as stated by a recent writer on Einstein—"not a separation in the external world, but is something contributed by the observer and dependent on his circumstances,"—i e., introduced by himself when he contemplates the order of nature and his own progress or track through the world as consisting of a "long chain of successive positions at

of the universe and even organic with it in the course of its evolution. It is only the Vedic seers that realised, even at the dawn of creation, and taught the world that there is no solution of the world of matter—its origin, working and purpose—apart from the needs of the evolving Jivatman and from Isvara's gracious resolve to be his helper by assigning to him all the opportunities which his Karma has earned for him and even more in accordance with his deserts. In the west, thinkers and philosophers have been handicapped,—*first*, by their absolute faith in the *noumenal reality*, of the universe and of life as an organic part of it; and, *secondly*, by their absolute faith in the scientific conception of the evolution of matter in all its phases, independently of the Jivatman's personality and its course through the universe.

Let us *first* consider the question of the reality or unreality of the universe, as it stands at present among Western thinkers and scientists. We in India find it impossible to realise what sensation has been recently caused there by Einstein's theory of the relativity of matter. The triumphs of scientific experiment and discovery have been so rapid and absorbing in the Western world that men have not been

able to pause and reflect upon the nature of the deductions to be made from them. However much science and its practical applications may develop, we must not fail to wisely estimate their value and bearing on the nature of the universe and on man's life, ideals, and destiny.

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successive instants." "Observers taking different tracks will have different perceptions and measures of space and time"—differences which are not to be disposed of by merely allowing for differences of velocity in different bodies,—differences of a more fundamental order and varying with each observer as he takes a track of his own in time and therefore also in space. Thus Einstein's relativity theory makes the connection of time and space more intimate and fundamental than was formerly supposed,—a change, however slight, in the present order of nature having its own effect in the determination of the future.—Time, too, depends on the motion of the observer, and not on a particular direction. Further, length in space and duration in time are known to us as measured with the aid of scales and clocks, and the results obtained by such measurements cannot be held to have a significance of absolute value in the external world, as is assumed in physical theories and calculations based on the Euclidean geometry of space,—*i.e.*, cannot be held to give the thing itself which enters in the most direct manner into the order of nature. Finally, the new theory leaves no room for the identification of even a single particle of matter or ether,—for we cannot say of it that it occupies

the same position in space even for two successive moments. Hence the idea of rest or motion relative to ether becomes meaningless, and we look away from particles to the etheric space as a *plenum* and the forces which pervade it and give instability to the order of nature as a whole. All this recent speculation regarding the relativity of matter as combining space and time goes to confirm the world-old Vedic doctrine that the material universe in all its stages of evolution is only a phenomenal, and not a substantial and absolute, reality.

In the second place, the doctrine of the evolution of matter in the West has failed to give a satisfactory account of the phenomena of life and personality. Every scientific man allows that by its nature matter is inert. How, then, are we to account for the first transition from the passive to the active? It is simply a begging of the question—or at best an attempt to avoid the issue—to say that “at some sudden crisis, an unusual stress of the will dormant in matter evoked an unprecedentedly strong response,” and thus arose the will to action and then the transformation of this will into the striving or the action itself. It is similarly tantamount to an evasion of the issue to say that circumstance is the source of the

power to act,—for, what is circumstance but matter which has evolved into the stage when energy which is potential is ready to become kinetic? How does matter which is inert—without motion or the possibility of it—develop the property of movement? How does it develop the phenomena of life and all that life, as it develops, implies,—viz., the will to live, the will to propagate life, and the capacity to live for the life of others? How does life in animals free itself from the limitation which renders plant-life incapable of changing the environment and only capable of giving a passive response? To say that accident or chance had to do with the earliest phases of development and that then the struggle for existence helped to bring on the further stages of evolution is simply to confess the incapacity of the trained scientific intelligence to explain the origin and early stages of the process of evolution. A truly scientific theory of evolution cannot afford to leave some of the facts unexplained and content itself with explaining what it can to the best of its lights. Further, it is wrong to suppose that all interpreters of the theory of evolution are agreed regarding all essential points. While some have held that evolu-



tion is a continual and progressive adjustment of inner to outer relations. Huxley has expressed his view that *ethical* evolution is opposed to, and liable in the end to be defeated by, the *cosmic* process, so that morality is only a transient phenomenon and man will or can get on without it as he proceeds with the process of struggle for existence inevitable in cosmic evolution.

The doctrine of the Vedas not only guards us against the snares and pitfalls of the theory of evolution, but gives a consistent and satisfactory reconciliation of the evolution of the Jivatman's life and personality with the evolution of the cosmos from its earliest to its latest stages. The origination, maintenance, and evolution of the universe in all its stages are, as explained at the commencement of this chapter, earned as the fruits of the conjoined karmas of all the Jivas in their previous lives in so far as they harmonise with each other and help to earn for them those opportunities for their further advance which Isvara graciously places at their disposal in order to help them forward to the attainment of that perfection of their true Self as the innermost Bliss of Love—an attainment which (as shown in the last chapter) is also His own cosmic purpose. The *Karma-Vasanas*

—or tendencies and impulses left behind and lodged in the mind as part of its organisation or furniture—determine all such phenomena of human personality and life as are now known as the will to live, the will to propagate life, the will to live for the life of others, the capacity for the higher life of the spirit, the will to action or power which leads to the modern competitive struggle among the nations for the exploitation of the earth's resources.

The Brahma-Sutra—ब्रह्मेव also points out that Pravritti or the faculty of action is that characteristic of the Jivatman which enables it to achieve its advance towards all the stages of evolution until it reaches the goal of enfranchisement from the bondage of matter and from those conditions of the environment which limit its powers of intelligent functioning and its discriminative choice of methods for the due fruition of its aims. It is a mistake to suppose that, in its course of evolution, matter was long without guidance from intelligence and that only at a certain stage of its history did its original inertia and passivity give place to the power of action or locomotion so as to develop life in all its forms and the struggles for life in all its forms among all the grades of intelligent beings. Isvara, in his gracious and supreme mercy,

is ever awake and ready to help all Jivas forward towards their destined goal. Even as he originates the universe as the reward for the Jiva's Karma, he watches over the evolution of matter for the same reason and purpose and gives us all every help towards the attainment of our goal of spiritual perfection.

Of the impressions or tendencies left behind by the Karmas of previous births and stored in our minds, a part becomes ripe for fruition and tends to determine our present activities. These tendencies are known to the Vedantin by the technical name of *Daiva* (देव) for after we have experienced the effect of those Karmas which are already ripe, we have to descend from Devaloka with what remains unspent of the stored up tendencies of the past. It is this stored-up remnant of tendencies that help the Jivas here in their further efforts and advances. Hence, the *Yoga-Vasishtha* says:—

देवलोकादिहागल्य लोकाद्वयद्वित सवेत् ।

प्राप्तं पौरवं तद्वै देवस्यदेव कथ्यते ॥

“That human endeavour of the past (births) which, having brought us here from Deva-loka, proves

to be a source of good for us in both worlds, is spoken of by the term *Daiva*."

The Karmic impressions of past lives stored up in men's minds have to be counteracted and rendered infructuous in order that the Jiva might have the right kind of evolution,—that which leads to the shining of that innermost Bliss of Love which is the one true Self of all Jivas. The *Yoga-Vasishtha* says further:—

कर्म यः प्राक्तनं सुखं न निहन्ति शुभैर्हितैः ।

अज्ञो जन्तुरनीशोऽसावात्मनः सुखदुःखयोः ॥

यस्तद्विद्वत्तत्कारः सदाचारविद्वद्वान् ।

स निर्याति जगन्मोहान्मृगेन्द्रः पञ्चरादिव ॥

"He who does not by auspicious effort, counteract the contemptible (effects of) past Karma is an ignorant brute and incapable of so regulating himself as to secure happiness and avoid misery. He who has the capacity for lofty endeavour and acts according to right rules of conduct liberates himself from the general ignorance even as a lion from his cage."

Sadachara or Dharmic endeavour (*Paurusham*)—पौरुषम्—is here pointed as the means by which the store of Karmic tendencies is to be wiped out and

replaced by the pure aims and activities (शुभैर्हितैः) which are to lead to the goal of Self Realisation. The *Yoga Vasishtha* defines this *Paurusham* as follows —

स्वाध्यायप्रवृत्त्यर्थैकप्रवृत्त्यपरता बुधैः ।

प्रोक्ता पौरुषशब्देन सा निम्नैः शास्त्रयस्त्रिता ॥

“The constant and whole hearted endeavour which secures the aims of the self is by the wise, called by the term *Paurusha* (Right human Activity). Such endeavour when influenced by the shastric injunctions leads to the attainment (of those aims) ”

It is thus a mistake to suppose that the Vedanta counsels mere passivity or indolence as the means to the Jiva's goal of self realisation. At the same time, it does not preach the exploitation of the innocent, the disorganised or the numerically weak as the one divinely appointed means to the gaining of glory and power on earth. The Vedanta recognises shastric activities of all kinds as the means to the Jiva's spiritual advancement and to the final realisation of the One Self which sustains and pervades the universe.

## CHAPTER VI.

### Isvara as the World's Helper.



R1 Krishna calls himself "the friend of all beings" (Gita, V. 29) and again (IX. 18) as "the sustainer, the lord, the witness, the refuge, the friend, the place of origin and dissolution, &c., of the universe."

Furthermore, he says of himself:—

"There is nothing ordained for me to do in (all) the three worlds, nothing to gain which is not already in my possession. Still, I do keep constantly engaged in (my own) activity. For, should I at any time not engage diligently in (such) activities, men would follow my example in all manner of ways. If I did not engage in activity, these worlds would be destroyed, I should become the cause of caste-commingling, and I should be ruining these people." (III. 22, 23, & 24), as they would not follow the avocations suitable to their innate dispositions and tendencies.

We have already pointed out what is the Supreme Lord's "Cosmic purpose" (Chap. IV),—the realisation of the unity of the Bliss of Love which is the changeless Interior Self (*Pratyag-atman*) of all living beings. The activities, in which he informs us (in the Gita passage above quoted) that he is constantly and diligently engaged, are all therefore clearly dedicated to the accomplishment of that purpose. The Lord claims not only thereby to save all living beings from the ruinous consequences of neglecting the activities prescribed as suitable and natural to them, but also to be the supporter, friend and helper of all to attain to the perfection of bliss which is their true self, and which the veil of beginningless ignorance (*Anadyavidya*) keeps concealed from their mind's vision. This primeval ignorance may be understood to have in the Vedanta a place analogous to the "original sin" in early Christianity as it probably issued from its first founder, though we can by no means be certain of it,—because it is veiled by the puerilities of the story of the Fall of Man as given in the Old Testament.

How do we know that Isvara in his supreme wisdom, power, and goodness, is our universal helper and friend? In the *first* place, we owe to him this

universe and this clothing of ours, physical and mental (with all its innate tendencies), which forms a part of the universe (*Brahma-Sutras*, I. 1—2). In the second place, he is the *Sastra-yoni*,—the revealer of the science or knowledge spoken of in the next aphorism (*Brahma-Sutras*, I, 1.—3). In explaining this sutra, Sankaracharya says:—"Isvara is the cause (i.e., revealer) of the eminent and revered system of knowledge—the R̥g-Veda, &c.,—which is supported by the teachings contained in various other branches of knowledge and which, like a blazing light, illuminates for us the entire truth regarding reality. No such system of knowledge as this, possessing the quality of omniscience, could have had its source except in the omniscient Supreme Divinity." Thus, the two grounds on which the Vedanta asserts its doctrine of God as the helper of all are:—(1) that he has given us our clothing of personality and our place in his universe in order to attain to the perfection of which we are capable; (2) that he has revealed to us the system of knowledge and culture needed to achieve that supreme destiny of ours which is also at the same time the one purpose of God's Cosmic Activity.



A recent writer in the "*Hibbert Journal*" speaks of the world as "a self-governing world, a world that contains within itself the power and the impulse for self-direction and self-improvement." He says further;—"The world is not governed from outside, but organises itself from inside and directs itself, expresses itself, and shapes its own destinies,—all in virtue of that spirit of self-improvement which animates the whole." All this is true, but the writer is not quite right when he goes on to say that "the old idea of the world as being governed by some distant external ruler is now being abandoned *as not in accordance with observed facts.*" The well-known South Indian missionary teacher and educationist, Dr. William Miller, in one of his Madras Sermons, proclaimed his conviction that the world owed to India alone the revelation of the Vedic doctrines of "the omnipenetrativeness of God and the solidarity of man." Though he was subjected to much obloquy for saying so, the quotation we have made above from the *Hibbert Journal* shows that his view of India's importance in religion has now gained universal acceptance. Still we need not or cannot deny that God is (and can be) *transcendent* (or *transeunt*) quite as

much as is *immanent* or "omni-penetrative." We have, at an earlier stage, explained the true significance and need of the Indian doctrine of the universal *immanence* of God. Briefly, it is this fact that enables us to know him truly, if we would, here and now. Isvara's transcendence or externality, however, is also known to the Vedanta, though not pressed therein (as already stated), for it has little bearing on our present fortunes or future destiny. In the Puranic side of our religion, however, it plays a prominent part. For, the unenlightened popular mind can only worship God as a being outside it and as a ruler seated aloft in the empyrean above the material universe and settling our affairs on earth and the future fate of all of us according to our deserts. In the Vedanta, where his immanence assumes an enormous practical importance, it is stated (see *Taittiriya-Upanishad*, II. 6) that he "willed" the creation of the world and, having brought it into manifestation, he "entered" it in the form of Jiva. Sri Sankaracharya points out that, as the Atman has no material form or body, its "entrance into the universe of material forms cannot be likened either to the entrance of a person into a house or to that of a reflected image of the sun into the water."

Sankara further explains,—“As the Atman—undifferentiated but the causal basis of all difference—is to be *realised* in this cave (of the human heart), he is depicted as having *entered* into it.” The Brahma Valli of this Upanishad is intended to teach us that the Noumenal Atman, in its personal aspect as Isvara helps all souls to realise in its essence the pure innermost Bliss of Love. Jesus taught — ‘The Kingship of God is at hand.’ This difficult saying of his is often explained as meaning that a new epoch of righteousness and peace was to dawn upon the world when his disciples had done the work he had entrusted to them of preparing it for his Second Advent and his rule over the Kingdom of God then to be founded by Him. Jesus frequently explained that he wanted all to do ‘the will of the Father in Heaven—not to render service or loyalty to himself. Nor did he play the role of the founder of a new state or society,—he was no statesman, economist, socialist, democrat, or revolutionist.—It is thus clear that the idea of *creation* cannot apply to the spirit of man. It is the *clothing* of the spirit with a material body that is spoken as *srishṭi* or *manifestation* in the Vedānta. There can also be no ‘creation’ of anything,

whether self or not-self, out of nothing. "*Ex nihilo nihil fit*,"—In the second place, the realisation that we have spoken of above comes to us also through Isvara's grace and help. For, he alone has revealed to us the Veda and Vedanta which contain the teaching needed for making the effort needed to attain to such a realisation. This is also clearly pointed out at the very commencement of the Brahma Sutras in I. 1—3.

We have, in the present connection, also to explain the special importance which is assigned to the *Acharya* (teacher) in the Vedanta. He is regarded as Isvara himself acting as the revealer of the truth and the enlightener of the human understanding. Says the Veda, "the man who has a teacher obtains realisation." Sri Sankaracharya says in one of his famous hymns:—"If your mind is not fixed on the lotus-feet of the Guru, what thence"—i.e., what does it profit a man to have all the various sorts of worldly possessions and gains? In his Bhashya on the Brahma-Sutras, he also says:—"The supreme Isvara assumes at pleasure various illusory (*Maya*) physical forms in order to show his grace and reveal the truth to those who are engaged in austerities." The Guru who removes the veil of ignorance

and reveals the truth which is behind the phenomenal world is also to be regarded as the Divine Person Himself. It is not possible for us to perceive or imagine the forms, methods or regions of activity in which Divine love can reveal itself to those who have sought to attract it towards themselves by faithful endeavour. It is easy enough to have love for family, friends, country, and the world in which we live and move. But the man who can rise beyond these transient forms and external shows to the Divine love which is the one substance hidden in all of them has a joy and freedom all his own. He alone can be the bearer of a message to others which will remove all heart-aches and make this life itself with all its evils and trammels a veritable Heaven of joy and freedom.

Only when we realise how *Isvara* helps us all by bringing into existence this universe of forms and names in which we live and move and hope and aspire and achieve, and how he helps us not only by proclaiming the teaching we need for our true self-revelation as the perfection of the light of love but also by making each of us (in our own good time) the channel for the transmission of his message of love to others—for only then and

not before or otherwise—we can understand in what sense Isvara is the universal helper. The Vedanta gives us the true and full revelation when it says—"Whenever righteousness languishes and unrighteousness is at its height, I manifest myself in the world. I am born age after age for the protection of the good, for the destruction of those who do evil, and for the establishment (once more) on a firm basis of the law of righteousness in the world." (Gita IV, 7&8) Moreover Sri Krishna says:—"I serve men in the way they approach me" (IV. 11). Furthermore, the blessed Bagavan graciously informs us that "men follow the path (which leads to me) by whatever road they proceed" (IV. 11). Sri Sankaracharya explains this statement as follows:—"Those who—whatever fruits they may desire—endeavour (to reach them) by the activity enjoined (by the shastras) on them in accordance with their inborn tendency (or qualification) are (to be) called men,—and no others." It is only thus that they form the family of the Divine Father, —a brotherhood of his disciples, or comrades bound together by a common obedience to Him and observing the duties enjoined on them by Him so as to reach finally the goal of *Chid-ghanananda*, the

unlimited joy of the intelligent self which is all Love.

The blessed Bhagavan's Incarnations (*Avataras*) are, however, only exceptional instances of the help he renders to his universal family out of his unique love for them. For, they occur only when they have fallen away from, and forgotten, the truth he has revealed to them. His love flows towards them in a perpetual stream of revelation of truth both through the succession of teachers (and disciples) who have maintained the traditional teaching, and also by himself when he graciously takes special forms at will to enlighten the minds and fulfil the needs and hopes of all who are steadfast in their fidelity to him. The blessed Bhagavan mentions four classes of godly men who are devoted to him in the order of merit. He says:—"Four kinds of men of righteous activity offer devotion to me,—the distressed, the inquirer after truth, the man who seeks wealth, and the man who has attained to a knowledge of the truth. Of them, the man who knows the truth (the Jnani) and who is steadfast in his devotion to me (because he knows that I am alone worthy of devotion and no other) attains to a unique excellence. To the Jnani I am exceedingly dear, and he is also dear to me. They have all,

indeed, attained to high excellence. But I regard the Jnani as my very Self. For, resolved to rise to attain the highest truth (in regard to me) and steadily concentrating his mind on me, he endeavours to attain to me as the highest aim (of life) to be attained." (Gita VII, 16—18). From this passage we see clearly that Isvara is always watchful to discover who are fit objects for loving help and interposition, and that he is ever engaged in the effort to raise them so as to enable each to attain the fruition of his endeavours and aims.

In this age of ours there is much disturbance and strife everywhere both among individuals and communities, and the world is full of sorrow and suffering. The chief reason is that the idea of democratic equality of all persons in society has been sown broadcast all over the world. Such a thing as the seeking of Isvara and the earning of his grace so as to rise to the progressive realisation of Him in all his glory and truth has disappeared from the world. An English writer—the late Mr. W. S. Lilly—has said:—"The masses in every country must be fetish-worshippers." It is the lower sort of ideas and aims that can become universally current among men. Hence such motives as self-



assertion and self-advancement, and the advancement of the interests and welfare of one's own community or nation, have a far greater vogue and value at the present day than the service of God through the fulfilment of his behests and the emancipation of the Jivatman from the bondage of sin and sensualism. The old conception of *chittasuddhi* (or the purification of the mind from all aims and desires other than the desire to do the will of Isvara and to realise Him truly in accordance with the teaching given in the eternal oracles of our race) has given place to the endeavour after social, industrial, commercial, and political betterment. The destiny of the human society and community on earth is the thought now most prominent in the minds of all Western leaders and Western Churches,—not at all the effort after one's own conversion or deliverance from sin or the saintliness, goodness, and beneficence which, after having accomplished one's own redemption, seeks to accomplish the deliverance of others from samsaric bondage,—the duty, which the blessed Bhagavan assigns to the Jnani under the name of *lokasangraha*. Isvara's grace is promised only to those who go through the travail involved in offering him in full measure the

homage and devotion of their hearts and in the fulfilment of all his commands. The conversion of men and their redemption from sin, the vivid enjoyment of Divine Love, and the glory and enchantment of self-realisation can be only individual and personal—not communal or collective. It is nothing but delusion to speak of religion in the public life of a democratic state or to seek the deliverance of a whole people from their collective sins through their *social* regeneration under the renovating influence and consciousness of a social creed and gospel.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### Is Isvara Finite or Infinite?



HIS question clearly arises in connection with Personal God—not with the Atman as beyond all attributes. In the Vedanta we recognise Isvara (or *Saguna-Brahman*) as the originator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe and the guide and helper of all persons who are born into it. All religious faith and spiritual progress among Hindus, whatever their stage of development, hinges upon the recognition of Isvara as a Person with whom we stand in various relations and attitudes at different times. Patanjali's Yoga-Darsana has the following classic definition:—"Isvara is a particular person (पुरुषविशेषः) who is untouched by afflictions, activities, (their) fruits, and the mental tendencies (*Vasanas*) left behind by them." His "permanent excellence or superiority" to other persons is chiefly stated to

consist in two attributes, viz., Omniscience and Omnipotence. Sri Sankaracharya says:—"He from whom, as the omniscient and omnipotent cause, the origination, sustentation and destruction of the world proceed,—the world of whose evolution according to law it is not possible to form an adequate conception even by our minds." We shall attempt to explain the true significance of what is implied in the doctrine regarding Isvara put forth in the above quotations from Patanjali and Sri Sankaracharya

In the case of a Jiva, we have the idea of a conscious self which persists in spite of the changes undergone by the mind and body arising from constant contact of one kind or another with the external environment and the other living persons amid whom we find ourselves placed. This conscious persistence has been the underlying cause leading to all the speculations of inquirers and the conflicts of contending creeds in the world. The Vedantin holds that this persistence is purely phenomenal, transient and unreal, and is therefore bound to cease when we reach the realisation of the "One (Reality) only without a second." But, while this continuous flow of life and experience lasts, every person feels a sense of his separateness from the

rest of life and from lifeless matter, a sense of his power to respond to stimulus from the world around him,—to gain knowledge, to maintain favourable acquisitions of all kinds and discard all changes having a contrary tendency,—to assert ourselves, in fact, in all our freedom of action and to attain to the “conservation of value” within our own realm of life’s ends and aims whether that value is understood as pleasure, moral approbation, or the highest good. This is, perhaps what Dr Bosanquet has in view when he says that “the universe is concerned with finite beings as a place of soul making.” So long as this process of “soul making” goes on in the universe, each and every person has a consciousness of his individuality and distinctiveness from all others. Dr Bosanquet speaks of it as “the *formal* distinctness of selves or souls, and goes on to explain why the distinctiveness is “*formal*.” He says that it “consists in the impossibility that one finite centre of experience should possess, as its own immediate experience, the immediate experience of another.” Dr Bosanquet further explains that our experience of the distinctness of souls “depends on unessential limitations, such as the fact of differences of vital feeling, depending as a rule on the belonging of

different selves to different bodies,"—that "if the hindrance against two selves having the same immediate experience could be removed, the result would be coalescence of the two selves into one." This means only that there are no *finite* individuals. But we know that such finiteness is the condition of individuality and of the consciousness of individuality, and that it is no abstraction, but a fact. We quite agree to Dr. Bosanquet's idea that "there is something more real." The Vedantin holds that this "something" is the "One (reality) only without a second,"—but that is a different story, and does not come in at the stage when we experience the "distinctness of souls," and are still engaged in the process of "soul-making." While this stage lasts, no "coalescence of two (or more) souls into one" can take place, though in sustaining the process of "soul-making" various kinds of altruistic activities, the organisation of various institutions of a progressive and abiding kind, &c., may be developed and made to cast into the shadow or subordinate the thought of the "distinctness of souls." Such a development of social or national life, however absorbing in its interest or productive of material values can never result in an actual or felt "coalescence of souls"

which are known as "distinct,"—even though there may arise moments when souls or selfs participating in such social or national life, may develop a more or less conscious neglect or forgetfulness of the fact of distinctness or individuality. So long as the consciousness of space, time and distinctness lasts, there must remain for all selfs or souls the consciousness of finiteness and individuation.

Let us now turn to the inquiry,—Is God finite or infinite? The author of the Yoga Darsana calls him a *Purusha Vishesha* (or particular soul), possessing all auspicious qualities such as omniscience, freedom from various imperfections and limitations leading to birth and death &c. The Vedantin of every school adds other qualities such as omnipotence, free will, &c. In the Advaita Vedanta, he is known as Saguna Brahman, the Brahman associated with the material universe. But this association is not due to *Karma bandha* arising from the ignorant identification of soul and matter, which is the cause of all the imperfection and misery of all ordinary living souls (*Jivas*). For Isvara has complete control over potential matter (*Mula Prakriti*) and its transformations (*Vikriti*) constituting the manifested world. It is this *purposive* association

with *Maya* that gives him the Personality which we assign to him and enables him to fulfil the functions which he has graciously assumed and is fulfilling in order to help the attainment of spiritual perfection by all living selfs in the universe. The blessed Bhagavan explains his position towards *Parkṛiti* and *Vikṛiti* in the Gita (IX—8, 9, & 10) —“Holding under my sway my own Prakṛiti, do I again and again re-fashion (the forms and personalities of) this entire collection of born (and living) beings who are dependent and without a will of their own owing to their being subject to Prakṛiti. Nor do these activities, O Dhananjaya, bind me, for I abide as one indifferent and unattached to these works. By me as (its unattached) controller, Prakṛiti gives birth to all moving and unmoving things; and for this reason, O Son of Kuntī, the world repeats its successive rounds of manifestation.” It is this relation of controller to the controlled world of matter that gives him his character as supreme Personal God and all the auspicious attributes above mentioned. It is this personality of his that makes him a finite being Dr. Bradley well says:—“A person, I should add, to me must be finite, or cease to be personal.” God is a person, and therefore finite.



He is a "separate individual" (*Purusha-Visesha*), as Dr. Bradley calls him. It is this fact that renders possible the love which other, finite selves feel for him, their trustful approach towards him according to the prescribed forms of ritual and devotion, and his gracious acceptance of them followed by meet recompense, according to gradations of merit. The blessed Bhagavan says (Gita, IX—26), "Whoever with devotion offers a leaf, flower, a fruit, or (even) water—I accept that offering of devotion from him of pure mind." Isvara here reveals how easy are his laws of service, how full of tenderness are his laws and methods of recompense, and how his yoke is light and his heart full of mercy. It is this personality of God that makes religion possible and natural to all. Of course, also, sin brings its own punishment according to divine law, but even when God smites, he does so not from wrath, but from love,—from the desire to reform and raise his creatures. Dr. Bradley says well, "I cannot deny, for one thing, the relation in religion between God and finite minds." He says that he "can accept the belief in God as a separate individual" only if it is "supplemented by other beliefs which really contradict it." He exclaims,—“Unless the Maker and

three-fold order of space" In his recent small work on "Relativity," Prof. Einstein writes as follows on the nature of space and time,—“the results of calculation indicate that, if matter be distributed uniformly, the universe would necessarily be spherical (or elliptical). Since in reality the detailed distribution is not uniform, the real universe will deviate in individual parts from the spherical, *i.e.*, will be quasi-spherical. But *it will be necessarily finite.*” (P. 114) For, barring these individual parts, the whole universe of observation extends over the surface of a sphere—and Prof. Einstein explains that the attempt to realise a straight line with measuring-rods on a spherical surface will only “obtain a curve, which we three-dimensional beings designate as a great circle, *i.e.*, a self-contained line of definite finite length, which can be measured up by means of a measuring-rod.” Prof Einstein then proceeds:—

“Similarly, this universe has a finite area that can be compared with the area of a square constructed with rods. The great charm resulting from this consideration lies in the recognition of the fact that *the universe of these beings “is finite and yet has no limits”* (P. 109). If, on the other hand, we imagine an existence in two-dimensional space,

Prof Einstein explains that "in their universe there is room for an infinite number of identical squares made up of rods *i.e.*, its volume (surface) is infinite" ' But the spherical surface beings do not need to go on a world tour in order to perceive that they are not living in a Euclidean universe of two dimensions ' They can convince themselves on every part of their world provided they do not use too small a piece of it Starting from a point they draw "straight lines" (arcs of circles as judged in three dimensional space) of equal length in all directions They will call the line joining the ends of these lines a *circle* But if this part taken for measurement is very small indeed they will no longer be able to determine that they are on a *spherical* world and not on a Euclidean plane for a small part of a spherical surface differs only slightly from a piece of a plane of the same size " (pp 109 110)

Similarly as regards time Prof Einstein points out that ' before the advent of the theory of relativity, it had always been tacitly assumed in physics that the statement of time had an absolute significance — *i.e.*, that it is independent of the state of motion *i.e.* that it is independent of the date of the motion of the body of reference" (p 27) But Einstein explains,

by taking an embankment and a train moving with a constant speed alongside of it in a particular direction. Two persons are seated, one on the train at a point  $M'$ , and the other just opposite at the point  $M$  on the embankment. Let us suppose two lightning strokes,  $A$  and  $B$ , from two places  $A$  and  $B$  on the embankment, and that  $M$  is the mid-point between  $A$  and  $B$ , and that  $M'$  is just opposite to  $M$  on the train. Prof. Einstein explains:—"Just when the flashes of lightning occur, the point  $M'$  naturally coincides with the point  $M$ , but it moves (let us say) towards the right ( $B$ ) with the velocity of the train. If an observer sitting in the position  $M'$  in the train did not possess this velocity, he would remain permanently at  $M$ , and the light rays emitted by the flashes of lightning,  $A$  and  $B$ , would reach him simultaneously, i.e., they would reach just where he is situated. Now, in reality, (considered with reference to the railway embankment) he is hastening towards the beam of light coming from  $B$ , while he is riding on ahead of the beam of light coming from  $A$ . Observers who take the railway train as their reference-body, must therefore come to the conclusion that the lightning-flash  $B$  took place earlier than the lightning-flash  $A$ . We

thus arrive at the following result,—that events which are simultaneous with reference to the embankment are not simultaneous with reference to the train and *vice versa* (relativity of simultaneity). Every reference-body has its own particular time; unless we are told the reference-body to which the statement of time refers, there is no meaning in a statement of the time of an event." (p. 26).

Having thus shown the finiteness (or relativity) of the Personal God by reference to his relation to the world of space and time, we may now make a brief reference to his attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, &c. Clearly, there cannot be an infinite (or countless) number of things to be known in a limited world of space and time. His knowledge will constantly embrace "*all*" the things which exist, but this does not mean an infinite number. Similarly, the potency (or power) of God is limited by the entire number of the phenomena of the universe and of their relations to each other. Similarly, with regard to Isvara's attributes of mercy, forgiveness, &c. Everywhere we have only to deal with the conception of "*all*"—not with that of *infinity*: *All* means the whole of what exists as the universe, and this harmonises with the idea of finitude, not with

that of infinity. Hence, we conclude that *Isvara* is *finite, not infinite*.

Note.—In previous chapters, the word "infinite" has been applied in one or two places with reference to *Isvara's* attributes, but only as they spring from his control over *Maya*, and so the word is used in its popular sense of what is beyond the present and possible attainments of the *Jiva*. The infinite is, properly, that which is beyond the finite, which, as above explained in the present chapter, includes the conception of All (*Sarva*) or the universe of *Maya*. *Isvara* is thus *All-Knowing, Almighty, &c.*,—not infinite. The Noumenal *Atman* is alone infinite.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### Is Isvara merely a "Society of Selves"?



IN modern thought in the West, God is not only conceived as a particular person (*Purusha-Visesha*)—as one of the selves in a pluralistic universe and yet supreme over them all and the material

world in which they live,—but he is also regarded as a society, college, or community of selves. There is, however, a difference of opinion as regards the relation of God to the persons forming the "Society." Dr. Rashdall holds that "all the conclusions which are applicable to each particular self in his relation to another, seems to be equally applicable to the relations between God and any other spirit." Here it is difficult to understand the true nature of the relation between the *individuality* of God and his *compounded nature* as a collocation (or society) of selves. In the Vedanta, when Isvara is spoken of as

*Antaryāmin* (the internal pervader of all other selves), his command over them is such that he can make use of the organs of any individual self for his purpose (and therefore all the separate persons too) in all cases where the fruits of the latter's karma are in harmony with such command or use. With regard to this view, there cannot apply such an objection as is involved in the argument that the *social* (or collective) mind of the selves is conceived on the analogy of a collection of objects occupying space and therefore contradictory of the purely psychical conception of an individualised consciousness which never is bereft of its attributes of identity and unity.—On the other hand, Dr. Mc. Taggart speaks of a society or college of selves as a "spiritual unity," but not an individual or person, and holds that God is *that spiritual unity*. He says:—"Each self can only exist in virtue of its connection with all the others and of the Absolute which is their unity. But this is a relation, not of subordination, but of reciprocal dependence." These two views are held by others along with minor variations as to the special nature of the relation in which God, as creator and ruler of the universe, stands to the living selves who form the "society" above spoken of.



Before taking up the Vedānta doctrine on the subject, we wish to state how Dr. Hoffding explains the fundamental difference in the evolution of the two Western conceptions or speculations above referred to. He refers both of them to a *purely analogical origin*. In one case, the analogy which forms the basis of the doctrine, is either the purely inner unity subsisting between the individual ego and its various conscious states or elements, or the relation subsisting between the physical life as the central fact and all sensuous or outer experience as its effect and manifestation. The inner unity first mentioned, suggests the conception of God as an all-pervading mind or person, controlling all the multiplicity of persons and objects in the universe. The other analogy suggests that as we have an inner self of our own, open to direct observation and giving an unity to all our activities and states, so all others have an inner self, too, which unifies their activities and states of all kinds, though it is clear that, in this latter case, our conclusion is based only on inference, and not on immediate observation and experience. As Indian writers put it,— ‘न हि दृष्टेऽनुपपन्ने माम्,’ “Where there is direct experience, no mere inference can avail to overthrow our know-

ledge." Moreover, Dr. Hoffding points out that "the dichotomy of psychical and material is purely empirical. No proof can be adduced that being must necessarily come under one or other of these two forms.....Being is not exhausted in these two forms of existence; on the contrary there are many—not to say with Spinoza, infinitely many—other forms of existence. It may be that the relation between the two forms of existence known to us, will only become comprehensible, when we know other forms of existence." The permanent contention of the Veda and other Indian sacred authorities is that there are such other forms of existence and that no theories or speculations founded on a limited experience of the two forms of existence known to the common run of mankind, can be relied on as satisfactory. That analogies have only a limited amount of cogency and a limited sphere of observation within which its cogency may be accepted as reliable, are matters which do not need to be insisted on at the present stage of human advance in knowledge. Moreover, mere speculation with or without a basis in analogy is always dangerous as furnishing a basis for human conduct or aspiration. In Europe, the inquiry into

reality or existence is entirely undertaken as a matter of intellectual training and discipline, and has therefore to justify itself before the judgment seat not only of human reasoning, but of human spiritual insight, imagination and experience.

In India, on the other hand, the inquiry into reality is always preceded by the knowledge of the source from which we are to gain help in our attempt. Each source has its own special sphere or province of truth, and does not encroach upon another! Sri Sankaracharya says:—"स्वविषयश्रूणि हि प्रमाणानि श्रोत्रादिवत्" "The sources of correct knowledge are each—like the ear &c.,—competent to deal with its own proper objects"; and again,—"**न च प्रमाणं प्रमाणान्तरेण विदध्यते । प्रमाणान्तराविषयमेव हि प्रमाणान्तरं ह्रापयति ।**" "One source of true knowledge does not come into conflict with another. Each such source gives knowledge only regarding what another does not treat about." In India, the three accepted sources of true knowledge, are sense-perception, ratiocination, and the words and sentences of the Veda. Each has its own special province of truth, and we go to each for its special-teaching concerning it. If it refers to any of the objects included in another's

province, it only does so with a subsidiary object, not as its chief or only purport and province.

The Veda-Shastra (the teaching of the Veda) is intended to convey knowledge of the means appropriate for obtaining what is most desirable for men. Sri Sankaracharya says:—

शास्त्रादेवात्र देव भवतीदमिष्टसाधनमिदमनिष्टसाधनमिति साध्यसाध-  
नसंबन्धविशेषामिव्यक्तिः । प्रदीपादिवत्तमसि रूपादिज्ञानम् । ननु शास्त्रं  
भूत्यानिव बलात्प्रवर्तयति नियोजयति वा । दृश्यन्ते हि पुरुषा रागादि-  
भारवाच्यास्त्रमप्यतिक्रामन्तः ।

“From the Shastra we obtain only this,—*viz.*, the proclaiming of the special connection between means and end,—that such and such are the means for what is desired and such and such are the means for what is not,—even as a lamp gives the knowledge of objects in darkness. The Shastra does not, like one's friends, forcibly draw one away from, or take one towards, an object sought. We see man violating (the precepts of) the Shastra owing to excess of desire and aversion, &c.” Hence in India we resort to the Veda for the true doctrine concerning God, the Absolute, &c., which are all altogether beyond sense-perception and the processes of reasoning. The Veda is no mere speculation, but contains the

truth regarding the supersensuous reality in order that a person may know how to act in order to attain to it. It is altogether a mistake to regard the Veda and the Vedanta as the fruits of the reflection of mere thinkers into the problems of speculative philosophy.

- No doubt we too speak of *Vichara* (inquiry),—but this means only the investigation by the disciple with the aid of a Guru (who has a realised knowledge) into the true import of the sentences of the Veda, in order to dispel all doubts and difficulties. The Veda itself allows such inquiry, while chiefly imparting its revelations (*upadesa*) regarding the truth.

We now turn to the teaching contained in the Veda regarding the present topic of inquiry,—*viz.*, God as a college or society of selves. The Upanishads often define Isvara as a collection or “Society” of all the particular individual souls in the universe. A well-known verse of Sri Sankaracharya also says:—(*Vedanta-Dindima*, sloka 6)

समष्टिर्वाष्टरूपै द्वौ पदार्थौ सर्वेषांमतौ ।

समष्टिरीश्वरो व्याष्टिर्जीवो वेदान्ताडिष्टिमः ॥

“All allow that objects fall into two categories, collective and particular. The collective is known

as Isvara, the particular as Jiva. Such is the trumpet-voice of the Veda."

It is clear that the objects referred to by Sri Sankaracharya in the above verse, are not purely material objects, but intelligent persons,—for he speaks, therein only of the distinction between Isvara and Jiva both of whom belong to the latter class. The Mandukya Upanishad speaks of the distinction between *Samashti* (collective) and the *Vyashti* (particular) personalities of Isvara and Jiva as related to three different stages or spheres of creation,—the *Sthula* (the world of gross external manifestation matter), the *Sukshma* (the internal world of subtle matter), and the *Karana* (the causal world of matter in its potential condition, known to the Vedanta as *Ajnana*, *Avidya*, *Maya sakti*, &c). As related to the gross world of sense-manifestation, the particular and collective personalities are known as *Visva* and *Vaisvanara*; as related to the world of mind, we have the distinction of *Taijasa* and *Hiranyagarbha*: lastly we have in the causal state of *Prakriti* the distinction of *Prajna* and *Isvara*. It must be pointed out that, in the Vedanta, the collective personality of God in all the stages, is not inconsistent with his retaining his own separate or

individual personality as distinguished from the jivas. For the Veda speaks of him as 'एको देव सर्वभूतेषु गूढः' "the one God who is hidden in the hearts of all living objects". It is this fact or attribute of the all pervasive power, that renders God omnipotent, omniscient, and the centre from which universal love, grace and mercy emanates and spreads over all like a protecting ægis or shadow, and distinguishes him from all other living and intelligent personalities, having only limited capabilities and spheres of activity. In the Purusha Sukta the Virat purusha (or Vaisvanara) aspect of Isvara is dwelt upon at length. In the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Hiranyagarbha (also called *Prana* or even *Agni*) is spoken of as having been first brought into existence as a person or ego (अहम्). The Upanishad explains this Sanskrit word, 'aham', as follows —

“आत्मैवेदमग्र आसीत्सुखविद्यं सोऽनुवीक्ष्य नान्यदात्मनो  
उपश्यत्सोऽहमस्मीत्यग्रे आहूतः सोऽहनामाभवत् ।”

At the beginning there was the Atman only with the form of a Purusha. He thought ('who am I, of what nature,' &c.) he saw not any one but himself, he exclaimed first, 'he am I (the ego)', and so his name was *Aham* (the ego). Sri Sankara explains

‘पुरुषविधः’ in the above-quoted passage to mean, ‘पुरुषप्रकारः शिरः पाष्वादिलक्षणः’ “having the form of a person with head, hands &c.” The Upanishad further says:— स यत्पूर्वोऽस्मात्सर्वस्मात्सवान्पाप्मेनभौषत्तस्मात्पुर्वः  
 “As he burned all sins before all these (other competitors for the office of the Creator), hence he is called Purusha.” Sri Sankara here gives the following explanations:—

“All this official position and function (as Creator) is the fruit of (Vedic) meditation and ritual and (therefore) within the sphere of the life of rebirths (Samsara), as the Sruti speaks (later) of Prajapati as having fear (मय) and the absence of satisfaction (अरति), as having body and senses, and as having objects of enjoyment of a material, sensible and transient quality.” Hence, as we shall see later, Prajapati (or Hiranyagarbha), though having creative functions and the power and knowledge required to pervade all souls, is still described only as the first-born of all living selves (Jivas)—as “प्रथमजरीति”. Sri Sankara further explains:—“Atma is called Prajapati (the lord of creation), and he is the first person with a body born from the *anda* (or egg) from which the universe came out; he is the fruit of the Vedic worship and ritual, performed



by him in his previous birth in order to obtain his present position as Creator." Also, in his Bhashya on the *Brahma-Sutras* (1—2—23), Sri Sankara says:—"In *Sruti* and *Smṛiti*, we see birth, &c., ascribed to *Prajapati* who has the three worlds as his body." He there quotes the following passages :

"हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताम्रे भूतस्य जातः पतिरेक आसीद् ।"

"स नै शरीरी प्रथमः स नै पुष्ट्य उच्यते । आदिर्हता स भूतानां समवर्तते ।" इति च ।

"*Hiranyagarbha* was born before the entire body of living beings and he was the one lord of them;" "He is the first embodied person, and he is called *Purusha*, the first creator of all beings, *Brahma*, born before all others." *Hiranyagarbha*, *Purusha*, *Prajapati* are all different names of the first of all *Jivas*" (*Prathamasariri*, as he is called in the *Sruti*). He was a functionary invested with the function of creation under the authority of *Isvara* who is the one supreme lord of the unmanifested (and, therefore, also of the manifested) universe, and therefore having precedence of *Hiranyagarbha*, *Prajapati*, &c., who, under his supreme control and direction, exercise the function of creating the world of matter in manifestation. Sri Sankara says:—"Even for the effected

Purusha, the power to pervade and to exist within all other living beings is possible, as he exists in the form of breath (*prana*) in the body of them all." At the same time, the Vedanta has no objection to regard this "effected Purusha" as Isvara himself, considering his dignity, functions, and characteristics as creator. Sankara points out this fact in the following passage of his Bhashya on the Upanishad:—"His limitation of powers is due to (the nature of) his physical body, not to his real nature (as Atman). In his true self, he is under no limitation. It is thus that there is both unity and diversity for Hiranyagarbha. The same is true for all living selves. But, in the case of Hiranyagarbha, owing to the extraordinary purity of his physical vesture, the Sruti and Smriti describe him not as one of the Jivas or living selves, but as higher,—as, in fact, no other than the Supreme Isvara or almost himself. Ordinary living selves, owing to the predominance of impurity in their limiting physical sheaths are mostly spoken of as possessing only limited powers of knowledge and action. As compared with them, therefore, Prajapati is spoken of as the supreme (पर)."

In the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad, it is pointed out that "सोऽविभक्तस्यादेकाद्यी विभेति." "He

(Prajapati) was in fear, therefore he who is alone has fear." Further, the Upanishad goes on to say:—

“स वै नैव रेमे तस्मादेकाकी न रमते स द्वितीयमैच्छन् । स हैतावानास यथा स्त्रीपुंशो संपरिष्वक्तौ स इममेवात्मानं द्वेधाऽपातयत्ततः पतिश्च पत्नी चाभवत् तस्मादिदमर्धकृण्वलमिव स्व.....तस्मादयमाकाशः स्त्रिया पूर्यत एव तां समभवत्ततो मनुष्या अजायन्त.”

“He (Prajapati) did not feel pleasure (*rati*). Hence, whoever is alone does not feel pleasure. He desired (to have) a second (or partner), to be, like male and female, united in each other's arms. He divided himself into two—and became husband and wife. So this (female) is a half part of the self which is incomplete (before marriage) and is therefore completed by the female. By this joining together, the human community was formed.” The Upanishad later goes on to point out that by this process of sex differentiation, all other classes and varieties of animals—cows, horses, &c., down to ants and other minute forms were created in the world. Thus the differentiation of life with name and form in the world, is due to love (*rati*)—to Divine Love. Eternal and Divine Love can alone remove the fear and pain (*bhaya* and *arati*) which association with the material body is apt to cause.

Hiranyagarbha and Vaisvanara or Virat-purusha—who are in fact only forms of Isvara, as exercising the function of creation at various stages—are not only thus distinct personalities, but are, as already seen, also stated to have a collective or communal personality pervading all particular selves,—*viz.*, what is known as *Sarvatmabhava*,—and to be in touch with their personalities. Hence we can easily explain their attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, universal mercy and love, and so on.

The world has known rare instances of men who have had in abundant measure what a great living writer—Professor Bertrand Russell—calls the *creative*, as distinguished from the *possessive*, impulse in man. Russell explains the distinction as follows:—“Possession means taking or keeping some good thing which another is prevented from enjoying; creation means putting into the world a good thing which otherwise, no one would be able to enjoy.” The possessive impulses “aim at acquiring or retaining something that cannot be shared”; the creative impulses “aim at bringing into the world some valuable thing or art or good-will, in which there is no private property.” Spinoza, too, spoke of the highest good as that which all may enjoy in common. The *truly*

creative impulse is that which originates in the passion of love—what the Vedic religion calls *Prema* (प्रेम) or *Rati* (रति). Professor Russell speaks with marvellous insight when he remarks that “in order to promote life, it is necessary to value something other than life.” Those who value life more than the personality who lives, are necessarily led to place a higher value on the accumulation of resources which help to add strength or pleasure to life than the effort to develop the individuality in man so as to make it wise, honest, fearless, helpful and hopeful in its relations with fellow-men. There have been men in the past who have exhibited an individuality of this higher kind in their relations to the world,—men who have never been self-assertive, but aimed at living a life of self-denial and sympathy which comprehends within its sweep, wide ranges of life,—some rare souls, too, whose hearts have gone out towards the world in the spirit of an all-embracing love which can know no differences of time and circumstances and can only recognise its essential unity and harmony with all forms of life, thought, and aspiration. If such an attitude and activity are possible, however rarely, for men, there can be no difficulty in conceiving how the personality of the eter-

nal creator and sustainer of the universe is one which loves, sustains, and nourishes the entire cosmos of selves; and seems, as it were, to form a "society" of them all whose relations are for ever co-ordinated and integrated into a living whole and made to march on towards the attainment of the goal of perfection which his own cosmic purpose has fixed as their supreme and final destiny.

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## CHAPTER. IX

### ISVARA AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL



THE modern mind has become so much affected by the doctrine of Evolution as to study even religion from its new standpoint and wishes to have it modified in the light afforded by it. But, as different minds hold different views regarding the conditions, past and present, which constitute the world's growth we find that we have only a Babel of conflicting views. No certainty and no guidance can be had from any quarter. On the most fundamental points, differences of principle, of method, of aim distract the attention. Hence many men regard religion as more and more a distracting, disturbing and disintegrating influence, and so only worthy to be discredited and disregarded by all.

The Veda, on the other hand, has laid down definite and unerring methods for the gaining by man

of the eternal and unvarying final goal of liberation from Samsara, but declared that the methods and stages of spiritual growth are different for different minds according to their present status in their march towards that goal. Hence, even though we have different interpretations of the Vedic religion, each interpretation has to represent itself as a final and settled fact. Moreover, all interpreters of the Veda are agreed on certain fundamental points, even though they disagree on others. For instance, all agree that the Veda has paramount authority and value for all searchers after liberation, that the final goal is the same for all, and that we cannot modify or discard the methods prescribed by the Veda for regulating our lives on earth.

We find at the present day a great deal of controversy in regard to the problem of evil in the world and its bearing on man's conceptions regarding the nature of God and his relation to man here and hereafter. What present-day controversies are like, may, in some measure, be judged if we pass in review some of the opinions advanced in regard to this problem. First, some hold that, so long as wickedness and suffering exist on earth it is impossible to hold that God is good and benevolent and



wishes—or works for—the happiness and well-being of his creatures on earth or even of the human race or any part of it. But, if there is (let us suppose) no evil and no sorrow anywhere, how can there be good or happiness? The world we live in is one in which we have both, for each implies the other. Nothing can be more opposed to facts than to define Christianity, as Goethe did, as “the worship of sorrow,” simply because Christ suffered on the Cross. If he avowed his pain and suffering and appealed to God not to forsake him, while resigning himself to His will, he also taught his followers that “the Kingdom of God is within you”—that the Kingdom could only be realised when they “loved each other even as I have loved you,” and that only then he would rule over their hearts’ Kingdom. Where love reigns in human hearts, only joy and strength will prevail, not the reverse. It is the presence and promise of love that constitutes goodness in God or man, and not the alleged—but unproved—presence of evil in creation, which is surely due to the development of human sensitiveness in man’s passage through this world of matter and cannot be said to be *inherent* in matter.

Many hold that God is a mysterious kind of ruler, so much above all law and morality and so omnipotent that he can somehow convert the evil that in fact exists into good, sorrow into joy, and loss into gain,—that he can abolish fundamental distinctions existing in the world, though the world is of his own making, and in fact is because it is of his making. But we have no reason to suppose that the world is a vain freak, not a designed fabric,—a phantom, not a hard fact. Further, we have no right to suppose that, though God is omniscient and omnipotent, he must necessarily be inclined—or feel himself called upon—to contradict and frustrate the practical order of the universe and his purpose in creating it. Nor is any such inclination or invitation logically involved in the conception and working of God's will as omnipotent. If God "makes all things new," it only means that, even as good may follow evil, evil not unoften follows good, in a world compounded and recompounded to the utmost extent conceivable. We have yet not known an individual, community, nation or race which, whatever its ideals, has undergone a spiritual transformation which has resulted in the overthrow of all evil and misery. In a world of struggle, forces of both kinds—good and evil—exist;

and, while there can be no stagnation, the change is quite as often in one direction as in the other. Hofding's idea of Conservation of Value is a truly rational idea with which we need not quarrel. The principle of utility is quite consistent with—is founded on the unquestionable fact of the conservation of matter (or energy). It is the change of form occurring in the course of nature or purposively introduced by man that helps to confer utility (value).

Some hold that evil exists in the world, that its authors—both individuals and communities—are invariably and in the long run punished for it, and that is due to God's righteousness as ruler and judge. But really there is no good and no evil,—for what is good for one is often known to be evil for another, and *vice versa*; and what is good at one place or time is evil at another. The seeming exceptions to this idea of relativity are due to want of sufficient knowledge of the world among us, and not to any possibility that exceptions may exist to the conception and idea that we live in a world of mere phenomena where the relativity of all material objects to place and time reigns supreme. It is this fact also that accounts for the change that is taking place in the forms of all material objects, and that

all civilisations and nationalities, and all the states and empires, which have existed in the world have undergone various transformations or even disappeared altogether in the revolutions recorded by history. We have no reason to believe that the nature and destiny of man or the world will be different in the future from what we have seen them to be in the past.

Some take a bolder stand and point out that war, pestilence, famine, and many another evil in the world occur irrespectively of man's deserts,—that a living, righteous and discriminating Providence cannot be said to have sent them as a punishment for the sins of his creatures and that they are, therefore, in reality the productions and works of Satan, *i.e.*, of the *Asuric element*—which undoubtedly exists in nature and acts in opposition to the divine (or *Daivic*) element therein. If this view is only intended to convey the idea—the Vedic conception—that the cosmic principle of matter resolves itself, in the course of evolution, into the duality of good and evil under the stress of the process of sense-perception in the *Jiva*, we can certainly accede to it as having a basis of reason and a sanction behind it which we regard as authoritative and binding as founded on supersensuous processes of mental concentration

resulting ultimately in the innermost bliss of Self-Realisation. But we cannot believe in the rationality of those Christian sectaries who accept it as a mystery or dogma which lays down that Satan is God's constant enemy, persisting in evil only to thwart his purposes, *endowed by God himself* with an intelligent personality and *created by God himself* for fulfilling a necessary function in the providential order of the world. For, matter is in itself neither evil nor good, if we do not take into account the Jiva's purely phenomenal states of conscious sense perception. We know, from the memories which arise after we have risen to the state of waking consciousness, that all conscious sense perceptions and all the baseless fabrics of our dream creation entirely cease in the Jiva's state of sleep or in his fits of swooning and fainting. Hence, they do not belong to the essential or fundamental nature of the Jiva, but can be recognised and accepted as his accidental or temporary adjuncts and accessories and certain to pass away for ever after the attainment of lasting *Mukti* through Self realisation (*Sakshatkara*).

If sin and suffering exist for us only as consequences of our own acts of disobedience of the divine dispensations and purposes, and if both cease

when self-realisation is attained after self-purification as a result of obedience to the divine laws and mandates, it cannot be properly said that any responsibility attaches to God for the commission of sins by the Jiva or for the infliction of punishment according to God's eternal will working in harmony with his pre-determined purposes and the permanent order of the universe. There is no higher being than God, and the very idea of responsibility for evil detracts from his super-eminent attributes of justice, mercy, authority, and wisdom. Evil exists for man owing to his ignorance, self-will, and perverse self-indulgence bringing about his downfall from the state of absolute purity inherent to the true and innermost Self (*Pratyagatman*) of all living beings. The Vedanta Sutra (II. 1—34) insists that God only confers good and evil according to the Jiva's Karma—i.e., to his deserts—and so he has no partiality for any one, nor is he destitute of sympathy. Śrī Sankaracharya says:—"Isvara must be regarded as having a nature like that of the clouds. As clouds are the *general cause* of the production of rice, barley, &c., and the *respective seeds* (sown in the soil) are the *special causes* of the different quality and quantity of those grains raised as produce from

the soil, so Isvara is the universal common cause in the creation of all Jivas, gods, men, &c., and the inequalities we find in their status and experiences—are due to the different Karmas (which have become mature and given rise to their present bodies and the fruits and enjoyments which are associated with them). As Isvara thus requires Karma as a co-operating agency, he is not chargeable with the faults of partiality (*vaishamya*) and heartlessness (*nairghrinya*).” A living writer says:—“God is able to bring good out of evil, but to see the hand of God in the evil itself is an error which is only the more dangerous because it has been shared by many of the great religious leaders of the past. If men see the hand of God, when they ought to see the power of Satan, they inevitably form a false conception of the nature and character of God—and to worship God under a false conception is the same thing as to worship a false God.” At the same time, it is an error to hold that God does not judge men, simply because Jesus said that “he makes his sun to rise upon the evil and the good” This saying only means that “the rising” of the sun is common to all, but that it affects men of different (*Karmic*) tendencies—the sinful and the virtuous—

differently and leads to their many differing kinds of activities and their fruits of all sorts and amounts.

We hold, also, that it is equally wrong to hold that we suffer as much and as often for others' faults and sins as for our own. In the former case,—i.e., where the suffering results from the doings of others, and we are unaware of the same, for some reason or other—it is certain that such doings of others and the dispositions and tendencies from which they spring have got related, in some manner or measure, to our own life and destiny here. Hence we see how erroneous is the view of the writer above-quoted that "it is precisely the fact that no kind of equitable proportion is traceable in this world between men's sufferings and their deserts which precludes us from regarding them as a direct divine punishment or judgment." This is to deny that God is the source both of law and love and that justice is not one of the divine attributes characterising his relations to his creatures, simply because we cannot fully comprehend or measure their workings or effects. It is, indeed, easy to escape, as this same writer does, from the recoil of one's faulty reasonings by holding that we are here "at the heart of the mystery of life,"—and that "no final solution to the problem has yet been



found." The Vedanta disdains this cowardly procedure and offers its own final solution—that above given—as the only one possible and satisfactory way of settling the problem of life. And the world must rejoice that it has at last also entered upon its task of enlightening and elevating it.

\* Evil, sorrow, repentance, recovery from sin, faith, devotion, self-realisation, and redemption from Samsaric wandering,—these form the successive stages of spiritual progress towards perfection of soul for all who follow the path sketched out by the sages of Aryavarta for attaining the goal of life. Some or most—or even all—of these stages may exist in other religions, or may be discovered in them by modern interpreters of them. But the speciality of the Vedic doctrine lies in the fact already pointed out that there is but One Existence only without a second,—the *Noumenal* Innermost Intelligent Bliss of the Atman; and that the superimposed reality (so-called) of matter is purely *phenomenal* (*vyavaharic*) and a practical help to the realisation of the former in due course of soul-evolution and perfection. This latter "reality" has no reality apart from the *substantial reality* on which it is superposed when the mind of the Jīva is

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formed and at work after its development through Karma in its passage through various incarnations. Matter is in its essential nature *jada* (non-intelligent) and so incapable of feeling and perception. Its evolution as mind is therefore subsequent to the superposition (and the consequent identification) of the Noumenal Self with the phenomenal matter (already mentioned) and takes place during its subsequent journeys in the world of matter. Before such evolution there can be no feeling, willing, or desiring, and hence no experiences of joy and sorrow. The Jiva's ignorance of the Supreme Innermost Self and its course of rebirths are each the cause and effect of the other, and we cannot say or determine which is prior and which is posterior even as we cannot say or determine whether the seed is posterior to the sprout or vice versa. The Atman alone is eternally pure and free—ever in its essence the one Undifferentiated Intelligence and Reality and the Innermost Bliss of Love. When it is realised in all its reality and fulness of perfection, all Samsaric evil and suffering vanish like the apparitions in a dream or the mother-of-pearl on the perception of the object before us as silver and nothing but silver.

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## CHAPTER X.

### ISVARA AND HUMAN FREEDOM.



MODERN Science proclaims the universality of the law of causation,—viz., the principle that every effect or event happening in the world must be connected with an invariable and antecedent phenomenon or group of phenomena known as cause. *The connection is conceived as a natural and objective one, and not simply as one analogous to that existing in logic between the antecedent premises and the conclusion drawn from them by an inevitable law or process of thought. Should we accept such a real, objective, and necessary uniformity of connection? Does it exist as an undeniable fact? Is it true both of the chain of events occurring in the external world, and of the volitions and impulses which arise in the human mind? Does its acceptance destroy and disprove the alleged equally universal*

experience of, and faith in, the freedom of the human will and, thereby, man's sense of moral responsibility both for his actions as a member of society and for the achievement of his own spiritual progress and perfection? Finally, is the acceptance of the freedom of the human will opposed to the doctrine of Isvara's omniscience and omnipotence?

We shall here deal with the problem from a purely rational point of view. In the world of not-self present to our sense-perceptions, we have clearly no experience of events happening without their appropriate causes. The same is also true of our experiences of the subjective world, in so far as they are the result of inherent tendencies (or *Vasanas*) which we bring with us from previous births and which ripen in time for the giving of their proper fruits. These tendencies (or impulses) result in various forms of activity unless counteracted by other impulses which act in a contrary direction or are even so strong as to suppress them altogether. In both these cases, the action of the law of causation is clearly discernible and unquestionable. But over and above these aspects of our experience, we have to consider the self of man as a living entity (or person) present in all our subjective states and

experiences, and existing, too as something different from a bundle or succession of such states and experiences which stand towards each other in a uniform and necessary relation of cause and effect. The self exists as a datum of consciousness,—as a common subjective factor and substratum in our perceptions and experiences of all kinds. As Sri Sankaracharya says—“Whoso denies it, proclaims thereby that it exists as his own self.” No one ever doubts that he exists as a person (or inner self) distinct and apart from all the experiences which belong to him. This person or self cannot be explained away as a mere sense presentation—for even in sense presentation it is present as the subjective factor determining the possibility and distinctiveness of an “existent” beyond itself portraying the object outside. Nor does such person or self originate in a mere association of sense presentations for such association is itself due to its inherent power of recognising and uniting them into a coherent whole. The self is to us a reality relating itself to its experiences, inner and outer, and so it cannot be identified with them. It alone interprets those experiences truly and relates itself to them and to the worlds, inner and outer from which they flow. The

question for consideration is,—whether this self has its own *free* and *self-determined* experiences apart from (a) the perceptions resulting from the causal succession of events taking place in the outer world; and from (b) the experiences resulting from the organised tendencies and impulses which are impressed on the mind as the effects of our past activities and expressed in this life or previous lives of ours.

The science of today does not deny the existence of this self, but explains it,—not, indeed, as a mere fortuitous concourse of atoms,—only as a centre or meeting-place of sensations, feelings and experiences of all kinds and associated together according to unvarying laws so as to form a personality determining its own fate in relation to its environment. Huxley, Haeckel, and others have taught that it is only within recent years that man's place in nature and his relations to other men and animals have been, discovered by Darwin, and that the latter's doctrine of descent confirmed by the facts of embryology and physiology, have destroyed the dogmas of all religions and shown them up as built upon mere illusions. The structural distance between the gorilla and the chimpanzee is less than that



which separates the latter from the lower apes. It is also said that "man closely resembles the most man-like apes, only his structure is more complex, and certain of his bodily organs are more highly and delicately differentiated." Among these organs of finer structure may be mentioned the hand, the tongue, and especially the brain and nerves. Furthermore, man is characterised by his capacity for self sacrifice, sympathy and sociality. All these qualities and powers in him are capable of being utilised both for good and evil, but the pressure of the environment has compelled him to utilise them for progress in civilisation, and good has on the whole predominated over evil in the world, even though human nature, individual or social, is still—and may ever be—as far from perfection as ever, owing to the struggle for existence entailed by all such advances. Man's nature—his entire constitution, bodily and mental—and its expression of all kinds, whether as thought, feeling, emotion, volition, or action, is determined in accordance with the law of causation. Each man has his own self thus slowly developed in the course of the past history of the world,—and the differences among the individuals composing any society are so great that they defy all explanation and

even definition. Hence, philosophers like Herbert Spencer are prepared to express their assurance that there is "a power behind humanity and things" which has been working in the direction of the advance so far achieved. Huxley has also assured us that the same power works behind nature and in man, and that it is to that power that we owe the ethical progress which has been achieved in the world in defiance of the cosmic law of necessity. Some scientific men even go further, and admit their belief in the possibility of an Absolute Being guiding the activities of man and the course of the Universe towards the achievement of a destiny, or even a *final purpose*,—but these men stand apart from their class who generally deny all final causes and the guidance of an Absolute Being, or Divine Personality, in any sense that can be intelligently comprehended by finite beings like ourselves.

According to the faith of the man of science above sketched, man's subjective life is as much determined by the law of causation as the course of the natural and material phenomena which form his environment outside. Hence his will cannot be said to be free in the sense that it is extraneous, or additional, to his life of experience as determined by his

place in nature and his progress in the course of material and mechanical evolution in a world of automata. Further, it is said that such a freedom of the human will in the sense of either an efficient or self determining cause, or in that of a purpose, ethical or spiritual, directing the *energies* of an intelligent or conscious personality, is difficult to reconcile with the fore-knowledge inseparable from the omniscience of a Divine Being. On the other hand, we find that it is those who believe in an omniscient and omnipotent Creator that insist on postulating the doctrine or faculty of human free will on the ground that to deny it would amount to denying all moral order in society and moral responsibility among men.

The truth is that, in the West, the ontological doctrine of free will or self determination and the scientific doctrine according to which the human will is determined to activity by invariable laws of causation are generally accepted as *irreconcilable*. The doctrine of freedom presupposes an efficient personality born with the faculty of volitional activity. Human activity also implies a purpose. The mere succession of cause and effect cannot be necessarily taken as implying such a purpose. Further, the scientific theory of determinism only proclaims that

of the universe in accordance with Karma, which is present to God's omniscience. Just as the potential forms of the various articles of clay produced one after another exist previously in the potter's mind, so also the entire course of events forming the future of the universe exists in the divine mind. Also, even as the forms of those articles already exist in the mass of clay with which the potter has to deal, and only become manifested when he has gone through the physical and mechanical operation which are needed, so the successive phenomena of the evolution of the universe forming the divine plan are already present in the material universe, though hidden, in their true forms. The Jiva, by his activities and efforts, only removes the veils of matter which overlay them and discovers them to our gaze. The Divine Architect of the universe has a fore-knowledge of the future in the same way as a Consulting Architect has a fore-knowledge of the house he plans and draws before it is actually constructed by the workmen he employs.

*Secondly*, Kant holds that we take upon ourselves the burden of obeying the moral imperative, and hence freedom is a primary and self-evident datum of our consciousness. Freedom and the

moral law are, in fact, but different aspects of one and the same phenomenon. "Thou canst, because thou oughtst." But this explanation forgets the fact that all men do not accept the moral imperativeness or the self-evidence of the law of duty, nor are even prepared to regard it as imposed by any sanction, divine or human. Hence the alleged mutual implication of freedom and morality, or even the dependence of the one upon the other, cannot be allowed to be true for all. Experience shows that, whatever the source of the moral imperative, unless there is an impulse in us to recognise its urgency and value, we do not feel free to act,—we even scorn its source, and reject its claims, and rebel against its sanctions. —

*Thirdly*, how does this inherent impulse, organised in man and which he brings with him become manifested in him, leading him to action, ethical or unethical? The human personality is neither a mechanical adaptation of elements derived from material nature, nor a merely sensitive centre responding to its environment nor even a mere focus of vital energies passing through regular stages of growth and decline,—but a conscious entity which, while it cannot escape or avoid what has been called "the sculpturing process of natural selection, is end-

owed with tendencies and impulses which, while themselves developed as the results of antecedent causes, act in their own turn, when the circumstances are favourable, as effective causal aids to the practical and purposive guidance of its own future evolution.

What, then, is the human self, as it has evolved through a succession of lives passed amid countless and varying environments and influences? It is a self-determined focus and centre of personality, having energies and capacities fit to enable it to achieve its own perfection, and in its essential nature free from all the chains of circumstance, past and present. Its liberation from the bondage of matter and its perfect self-realisation can be achieved when it obeys the commands of its divine source and author. At the same time, it is a mistake to suppose that it is a mere conduit for the flow of inspiration from the perfect and gracious personality of God. Though God is the fountain-source of its very existence as an independent centre of vitality, activity, and thought, he has permitted it to build up its own personality according to its own chosen lines of karmic evolution. Had its inner evolution been in unquestioning accordance with the divine will and the precepts of

Dharma,—had the human mind never allowed itself to follow independent lines of evolution, the revelation of God in man would for one and all of us be a reality, and would not merely be viewed as a logician's dialectical extravagance or a Vedic poet's waking dream.

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## CHAPTER. XI

### ISVARA—HAS HE ANGER ?



F late there has been a good deal of discussion among thinkers and theologians in the West upon the question whether God has and exercises the emotion of anger, and in what sense? Its bearing upon the Vedantic conception of Isvara has clearly an interest for us in India. The problem, too, is one which throws light on various aspects of Indian thought and life, and therefore deserves consideration. In the *first* place, we must not fail to note that we are here concerned only with the conception of the Supreme Being having relations with men and the universe,—not as Impersonal or Pure existence, the One only without a Second; mere experience as such. We cannot associate love and anger, reward and punishment, plan and purpose, law and life, creation and destruction with the Noumenal Unity of the



Brahman, pure and unchanging,—the Innermost light of Bliss, beyond the pluralistic world of sense and thought, will and emotion, emanating from the bosom of primordial matter in its causal state of darkness and death. In the *second* place, we must clearly understand that, when we use words expressive of emotion impulse purpose, etc., in respect of God we attach—and must attach—to them the same import as they have when we use them in describing our views of men and our dealings with them in life. Otherwise the discussion loses its value, and no vital issue can be raised or settled on the quicksands of mere verbiage.

We must begin by realising that many of the difficulties of Western theology arise from the fact that its conception of Personality is drawn from the scientific analysis of the mind, conscious and subconscious, and that it bases its conclusions regarding the personality of God from what we know of human personality under its limitations of thought, time and place. All modern modes of thought concerning religion are effected by the apprehension that, unless our conclusion is based on the facts revealed by science and the lessons drawn from the history of civilisation and human progress it is bound

to dry up and wither away into an inconclusive unreality in course of time. But in truth the Personality of God is as the poles apart from that of man,—for it is inseparably associated with the attributes of Universal Immanence, Universal Transcendence, &c., and is thus emancipated, from the limitations under which personality is alone found to operate in man. The truth is that analogy has played a memorable part in settling for many of us the truths of religion. Even the Vedas which have ever been understood in India as the one source of true knowledge apart from sense perception and the methods of reasoning are known to resort to analogies in various places. But doctrines affirmed in this fashion are not to be understood as conveying the true and final purport of the Vedas. At the same time we cannot admit that the analogies put forward by the Veda (or by the human mind acting on its own spiritual impulses, needs, or interests) can have no value for the mind of the thinker. Even the thinker must admit that those analogies are drawn from those same human impulses, needs, interests, etc., which form part of our ordered experience of life. Hence they have an intrinsic value of their own, and in fact enable us to reject the sceptical doctrine

that, whoever postulates or discusses a doctrine concerning God has necessarily to begin and end with an abstraction,—a merely *a priori* concept of the imagination.

As anger is a decisive element in the workings of the human personality, and even rises occasionally to heights of vehemence which we characterise as fury, the inquiry has been started (first by Mr. Edwyn Bevan in the *Quarterly Review*, April 1923).—Can we attribute the passion of anger, and anger, too, varying in its stages and amounts according to the occasion which calls it forth, to God? The Christian religion, basing itself on the Old Testament tradition, has attributed anger to God as the Avenger when man breaks the divine commandments and thereby commits sin. The modern Christian, who has learned to apply the principle of evolution to the teachings given in the Bible holds that, though in the history of the Jews there was a gradual advance in moral ideals through the reforms initiated by the prophets, the race never was able to eliminate the idea of a wrathful Jehovah from its religion,—and that it was Jesus who, recognising the imperfection of the older conception of God, added the idea of a loving father and the Kingdom of Heaven

(in the world and in human hearts) over which he is to reign. Some go further and hold that Jesus entirely discarded the Old Testament conception of an avenging God for that of the loving father who reigns in the new Kingdom of Heaven. But the more authoritative view is that Jesus never spoke disparagingly of Jehovah,—and never corrected the old Jewish law by way of relaxation, but only confirmed it, while at the same time he made a fresh start and taught that God is a loving father always ready to forgive the repentant sinner, to extend his grace freely to him and to bestow on him all the joys of Heaven for-ever. The old law of punishment has also said:—"His lord was wroth, and delivered him unto the tormentors till he should pay all that he owed." If Ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly father forgive your trespasses." These extracts show that Jesus did not altogether abandon the idea of an angry and avenging God and also held that "God's forgiveness was granted on conditions." St. Paul, too, has said—"The wrath of God is revealed in Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. It was the influence of Cicero and other philosophers and of the Latin fathers and the Hellenised Christians like Philo of Alexandria

that brought about a change Cicero had said — God is never angry, and never does harm " He held that divinity and the passion of anger and in fact passion in any form, are incompatible "Anger implied a will to hurt, and God could never will to do anything but good " Philo held that God is never really angry, but only pretends to be angry in order to frighten sinners for their good The later Christian writers followed more or less in the same strain

We now turn to Mr Edwyn Bevan himself He asks — ' Can we, without absurd anthropomorphism, attribute anger to God " According to him, the question applies both to Anger and Love But he says — " If we believe that God is *truly* love, even though love as it exists in human beings has characteristics which cannot be attributed to God, then we cannot argue that anger is conceivable in God, simply because anger, as it exists in human beings, has characteristics which cannot be attributed to him ' Mr Bevan holds that, in speaking of God, there is a legitimate and illegitimate anthropomorphism,—and that only the latter needs to be avoided When we attribute a human passion to God, we can only, according to Mr Bevan, legitimately do so if we regard it as existing in Him "without the limita

tions and accidents which circumscribe it in man;" "when we attribute any of these limitations and accidents to Him, then we have illegitimate anthropomorphism." Mr. Bevan also strongly dissents from the view held by those who, in order to get rid of these difficulties regard Him as Impersonal. He says:—"As well describe him as being utterly unknown. If He is utterly unknown, a mere blank, you cannot even say that He exists. He would at any rate have no sort of existence of which we could take account." Mr. Bevan also objects to the doctrine of Mr Wells—one of those recent hypotheses of his about God, chameleon-like in their variety, coming in like a flood—that he is to be regarded as "Impersonal Reason," or "Impersonal Purpose." Mr. Bevan writes:—"Reason and Purpose we know, and can conceive of as existing in a Person; impersonal reason and impersonal purpose are really terms that mean nothing." We can certainly sympathise with this view, though we do not see why "terms which mean nothing" for us with our present knowledge may convey a truth with regard to God whose nature we do not *know*, but whose presence we may *feel* or *even experience* in a manner which we cannot express to others or quite

understand, and make intelligible and *known* to ourselves. Mr Bevan is not also himself consistent, though he complains of Mr Wells' inconsistencies. For, he holds that, "while we cannot imagine what love means in the life of God, there is a common quality in virtue of which the love that exists in him and that which exists in us can rightly be classed together under the name of love." Similarly he holds, in regard to anger, there is an analogy between the anger of God and "anger at its best in man,"—an element which he defines as "a warm sense of moral unworth in the wrong action." He continues—"Just as in human anger there is a desire to bring together doing and suffering, so in God's anger there must be the will that the connection should exist. Similarly in regard to love. Mr Bevan, however, forgets that, while he is very logical in insisting that reason and purpose should, on the principle of analogy, be ascribed only to a Personal God, he cannot hold that neither anger, nor love can be ascribed to God, if, as he holds, "our imagination cannot reproduce what God's life is to him," and 'we cannot imagine what love (and anger) means in the life of God'."

The truth is that Western thinkers and theologians go on merely *speculating* about God and his relation to the Universe. In India, on the other hand, we have distinct *sources* of knowledge (*Pra-manas*) for different kinds of existences, and do not confound issues which are distinct. The Vedas are the authoritative sources of correct knowledge concerning the nature of God as the Supreme Being and his relation to the universe. We apply the methods of ratiocination only to establish the truth and consistency of the declarations contained in the Vedas, leaving to the practical methods of *Yoga* and *Jnana* to secure to us as *spiritual experience* what we cannot *know as thought* by our minds, or as *perception* by our senses. According to the Vedas—and the *Itihasas* and *Puranas* devised by the Rishis to illuminate what is dark in them—the Personal God has neither hatred nor even love, neither friends nor foes (see *Gita*, IX, 29).—for, He is One only and related in the same way to all beings like the light of the sun. He is near to the heart of His devotees, but distant to others,—even as the light of the sun shines in transparent, but not in opaque substances. As, in the latter case, the difference lies in the substances, not in the light of the sun, so, in the



former case, the difference lies in men, not in the Lord. The significance is similar where Sri Krishna speaks of various devotees as dear to Him in various degrees (Gita, XII 13-17). The differences lie with the devotees, and the corresponding effects are different. The Brahma Sutras of Vyasa also deny that there is any differential treatment (*Vaishamyō*) or the quality of being compassionless (*Nourghrīya*) in the Lord's relations to the world of life and form,—all being treated according to their Karmic deserts (Sutra 34 of II, 1). Sri Sankaracharya adduces the further illustration of the God of Rain (*Parjanya*)—"As Parjanya is the common cause of the production of rice, barley, and other plants while the difference between the various species is due to the various potentialities hidden in the various seeds, so the Lord is the common cause of the creation of Gods, Men, etc. while the differences between these various classes of beings are due to the differences of merit belonging to the individual souls." Sri Sankara, in a noteworthy passage, continues—"If we are asked how we come to know that the Lord creates the world having regard to these various conditions, we reply that the *Śruti* is the source of all correct knowledge concerning what is beyond the faculties of

sense-perception and the mind of man, and thus saves us from all merely arid speculation." The question now raised,—Whether God, like men, has the emotion of anger and, if so, what is its nature and content,—is beside the point. The Brahma-Sutra (32), in the above connection, denies—following the Vedas—that the Lord has any purpose or motive (*Prayojana*) of his own in creating the Universe. Sri Sankaracharya explains :—"That would be in conflict with the declaration of the Sruti that the Supreme Person has unlimited self-sufficiency (*Paritriptatvam*)." But, in that case, why—as Sri Sankara asks—does he go through the tremendous exertion (*Gurutara-Samrambham*) of creating this extended universe of unlimited forms of being?" The answer is contained in Sutra 33 :—"The Lord's creative activity) is mere sport (*lila-kaivalyam*), as we see in the world." Sri Sankara explains :—"We see in the every-day life of the world certain activities of kings or ministers of kings who have no unfulfilled desires relating to the worldly possessions, but proceed from mere love of sport to indulge in various recreations and amusements. We also see that the process of inhalation and exhalation, is going on without reference to any

extraneous purpose, merely following the law of its own nature. Analogously the activity of the Lord also may be supposed to be mere sport proceeding from the nature subject to Him (Maya, joined with time and Karma) and having no extraneous purpose."

In this connection we have also to refer to the Vedic doctrine of Avatara (descent into the world of form and personality) contained in the Gita (IV 7-8). The Lord's aim in making an avatara is stated as follows:—"The protection of the good, the destruction of the doers of wickedness, and the establishment of Dharma (righteousness)." Krishna also informs us (IV 9) that His body and His acts are unlike those of ordinary men,—i.e., they have not a merely material origin, but are spiritual and divine (*divya*). In Chapter IX 11, he also points out,—"because he was working with a (seemingly) human form, people, who did not know that He was the Supreme Being Himself, treated Him with disdain." The meaning is that though He seemed to others to have a human form owing to the exercise of His power of Maya on the minds of all. He did not cease to be the Supreme Being, untouched by matter and free from all egotistic

attachment to the deeds He wrought or the resulting fruits affecting the lives and destinies of all living beings on earth. For these very reasons, also, He clearly could not have any of the emotions of human beings,—though He *seemed* to have such emotions, even as He seemed to have a human form and to engage in activities like men. Here is the *Vedic* solution of the problem of “the anger of God,”—*viz.*, that, even though God may seem, from our point of view, to have anger or other emotions and to engage in activities with the form of a human being, He is not at all in truth associated with such a form or with emotions and activities corresponding to it. Hence, Mr. Bevan’s speculations in regard to the ingredients common to the anger (or love) of God and the anger (or love) of man are simply futile. The truth is that, in framing our religious doctrine, we do not always sufficiently realise that we live in a world where the operation of law is universal,—a world of *rachana*, of orderly evolution, to use the language of Vyasa in the *Brahma-Sutras*. In ascribing human emotions, activities, attachments to the Creator, man wants to transfer the blame and responsibility for the consequences of his own actions from his own shoulders to the former. The

attempt, however, proves a failure. For, we have shown that God cannot, in any sense, be said to be the willing author of any pain by way of retributive chastisement, or even of any extra reward, except what each individual obtains as the inevitable effect of his voluntary action upon the material universe. Anger, righteous or unrighteous is an element only in the human character, not in the divine. If it is only ascribed by man to God, it is due to the circumstance that He judges of the attributes of God from the analogy of what he finds in the personality of man as compounded of both good and evil. The best of men are unable to get rid of the long established and ingrained bias of anthropomorphism (or even of animism). Analogy has been a huge factor in the development of religion. Even the Vedas, as we have above said, resort to analogy in order to render religion in all its stages intelligible to those who come within the range of their influence and according to the measure of their opportunities and capacities. But the Vedas unfailingly and at every step, declare the highest doctrine concerning the essential nature of God as the one Innermost Supreme Reality of the Bliss (Ananda) without a second, so that mere analogies regarding God and His relation

to the universe,—drawn from the conception we have formed of an organism or mechanism, and still more from the ethical and spiritual ideas of Him which have been framed by thinking minds among various communities, such as God being judge, father, mother, king residing in a capital city like Vaikuntha, Kailasa, etc.,—have no vital and real bearing on his essential nature, but relate to what his Personality is conceived to be under the energising operation or exercise of his power of *Maya*. Sri Sankara says :—“The highest Lord also may, when so inclined, assume a bodily shape formed of *Maya*, in order that His grace may flow towards His devout worshippers (*sadhaka onugrahartha*)”; “for purposes of devout meditation, a special abode may be assigned to Brahman, although it abides in its own glory only; as Brahman is, like ether, all-pervading, it may be viewed as being the innermost self of all; the statement, finally, about the limitation of Brahman's omnipotence, etc., might be conceived as having reference to the requirements of devout meditation only.” That God, as absolute Brahman or even as the Supreme Lord of the Universe of *Maya*, has no form or attributes need not be stated. It is through the veil of matter (*Maya, Prakriti*)—

his own, that of which he is master (*Gita*, IV-6)—that he gets related to the manifested world where the universal law of cause and effect is in operation, and, through that relation becomes a Personality, becomes the Universal Lord (*Parameswara*). Isvara has no form except what he has to assume, no attributes except what are implied and required, for the purposes of the universe and its working adjustments in accordance with the Law of Karma.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### ISVARA—AND THE NEED OF A MEDIATOR.



IN the Christian religion, not only is God regarded as inflicting punishment upon man—and “the moral relation between God and man is conceived in terms of criminal law”—so as to bring about a reformation and prevent further acts of disobedience to His commands, but God’s attitude to man is also always deemed to be one full of love and mercy and grace. Even while God judges and punishes, He does so only in the spirit which actuates a father when he punishes his son for disobedience as a means of getting him chastened and thereby helping to build up his character. If, in the latter case, this process of character-formation involves suffering for either father or son, it is a necessity of human nature and life. In



the former case, God suffers, too, while he punishes, and, as Abelard points out, "The atonement (between God and man) is wrought by Christ's love which draws out man's love in return" Man is a *spirit even as God is, and so God can reveal himself as Christ man so as the latter may perform a supreme act of loving sacrifice on the Cross and thereby accomplish, in however mysterious a manner, the revelation of the Kingdom of God in man* When agnostics like the late Sir Leslie Stephen declare that 'the conception of God as an almighty Chief Justice is too antiquated for serious discussion,' they forget that the Christian or deistic conception of God as a Judge is intended only as a metaphor, and not to be taken literally Christian theologians have not failed to realise that 'punishment which is merely retributive is always non moral or immoral, in the case of the Creator, it would be outrageous' But, when Christians aver that God's punishment of sin proceeds from a desire to produce a chastening and disciplining effect on the soul, it must be said that the analogy of God to the father is pushed too far. It has also been held, and rightly, as we conceive it, that in the Christian religion God, finding that the laws, natural and spiritual, which are inseparably

associated with the nature of man and his place in the universe are insufficient for the accomplishment of his aims in creation, has to interpose His own personality in the form of the incarnation of Christ for the reform and redemption of man. Those laws ought in themselves to be sufficient for efficiently dealing with and conclusively determining the relations of all human personalities towards each other and also towards God Himself. In reply, however, the question is asked,—“Why should not God lovingly assume the form of man and work for the latter’s redemption?” Christian theologians and apologists have, in fact, often claimed that, when they speak of the need of an intercessor between God and man, in the form of Christ’s Incarnation, this is exactly what they have in view. The Hindus, too, have their doctrine of *Avataras*, and the Vedanta seems to sanction it when the *Gita* declares that, whenever sin increases and virtue declines, God incarnates for the punishment of the wicked, the guarding of the righteous from being overwhelmed in ruin by their atrocities, and for the renewed proclamation of the eternal laws of righteousness which have lost their vogue and hold on the minds of men. But they steer clear of the

Western idea that, either in His divine or human form (as incarnation) God has (or can have) any suffering,—either that which arises from His (supposed) grief at the thoughtlessness and perversity of the sinner, or which is due to His taking, as in the case of Jesus, on his own shoulders, the burden of man's sin in order to secure the latter's redemption.

The doctrine of vicarious transfer (though different from the Christian in essentials) is not unknown to Hinduism. For, the South Indian School of Vaishnavism holds what is known as the doctrine of *Nyasa* or *Nikshepa* as the essence of *prapatti* (not *Bhakti*). The doctrine, however, is freed from the specialities considered essential in Christianity. In the first place, there is no single intercessor for all mankind. God alone can be the universal mediator, and no responsibility can be assigned to God or imposed on Him for man's redemption. For, as the Supreme Lord of the universe, He need neither have, nor take, any of the responsibility attaching to man especially when the latter has the capacity and will of repentance and reform as an endowment and characteristic of His mixed nature. In the second place, the repentant human soul is required to feel the (preliminary) assurance that God will grant him

the redemption he seeks. Another preliminary condition is that he must resolve—and proclaim his resolve—never again to violate God's commandments as resolved in the Sastras, feel compassion for all creatures, and avoid everything likely to be an impediment to the continuance of his act of self-surrender and unconditional reliance on God's supreme mercy as the only source of his redemption from the misery of the bondage of rebirths. In the third place, the responsibility accepted by the Guru ceases the moment he conveys to God the repentant *Jiva's* desire for redemption and God, in His unbounded mercy, has accepted the latter as his devotee and dependant (*dasa*). God also unfailingly accepts intercession in the case of one and all. For, the Vaishnava does not, like the Christian, hold that the *Jiva's* sin and fall make him incapable of entering into communion with God. The *Jiva* never loses his capacity for repentance. According to the *Gita*, repentance rapidly acts to make him again righteous, and thereby renders him worthy of his intercessor's helpful intervention and his acceptance by God as a matter of course. In the fourth place, the doctrine put into the mouth of Jesus that he is "forsaken" by God while voluntarily

(or involuntarily) suffering for others seems,—to a rationalistic mind at least,—both inconsistent in Jesus and unworthy of the being and characteristics of the Supreme. For, Christ has entered on his mission with the consent and approval of God, and, further, God can never "forsake" any one, and much less His divine representative and incarnation on earth. In the fifth place, we must not forget that, when the *Nyasa* or *Nikshepa* (the placing of the burden and responsibility for redemption) takes place and the *Acharya* takes on himself the task of an intercessor with God, the *Jiva* is at once, by his very act of repentance and solicitude for his soul's future, transformed into a righteous person,—into a "*Dharmatma*"—and attains to "peace," as the result of God's acceptance of him and his gracious act of redemption (*Gita*, IX, 30, 31)

In the Christian doctrine, one of the chief difficulties arises (a) from the fact that the burden of sin is conceived in a rather too material sense, i.e., as something *weighing* on the sinner and requiring to be removed and placed on Christ's shoulders in order to help the former's deliverance, and (b) from the idea that Christ himself underwent sufferings of an inconceivable kind and amount from the

transfer of the load of sin to his own shoulders and personality ; and (c) that the incarnating body and person of Jesus is no longer available to us for our present redemption by reason of His Ascension to Heaven when His mission to earth had been fulfilled. Christ's physical death and physical resurrection are regarded as the most insuperable of all difficulties and accepted in many quarters as mysteries not comprehensible by the limited understandings of men. It is easy enough to argue or accept the idea that service may involve sacrifice, and sacrifice in its extreme limit and form, may involve death, as in the case of the late Father Damien, who sacrificed his life and became a martyr in the service of the lepers of Fiji islands. When, however, we once accept the fact of Christ's divinity as an Incarnation, the fact of death, especially when it is conceived as a judgment inflicted by a human judge over one brought up before his tribunal, presents difficulties which human reason cannot easily overcome,—and so we must once for all resolve to accept them as incomprehensible and insoluble mysteries which are matters of pure faith and not at all capable of being reasoned about and made clear to the understanding. Sometimes, the mystery is solved by the contention

that, though the physical body of Christ's original incarnation is no longer available, He still lives, like God Himself, in every human being in such a manner that *personal intercourse* is possible between the two in such a manner as to elevate and purify the human spirit. If the process of personal intercourse between the spirit of man and the spirit of Christ is now possible as a means of the former's redemption, the question arises—"Where was the necessity of His physical incarnation and death on the Cross originally for this same purpose?" For, His coming had none of the larger aims which the *Gita* assigns to our divine *Avatars*, and He only came once for all and never again nor is His presence and intervention understood as needed again. If it is argued that only the unredeemed *of to day* require or gain the inward personal enlightenment and that this enlightenment is conveyed by the communication of grace and mercy alone without the need of a physical incarnation how can we avoid the inquiry why the same should not have formerly been equally sufficient and efficacious? The Incarnation of Jesus, when it did happen, would then lose its character of indispensableness, and this requires explanation. Further, as God, Christ, and man are, in a dualistic

system like Christianity, different entities, how can they exist and have their sphere of operation in the same physical centre, whether mind or body, without a conflict happening, unless it is held that they have only identical aims,—a supposition which is clearly untenable, at least in regard to man? Lastly, we have the difficulty, often felt even by faithful Christians, that redemption, as originally conceived, has the form of a transaction (or bargain) between God and His Eternal and Divine Son, that the claims which God makes in order to compass man's redemption can only be made good by Christ's physical sacrifice and death,—a procedure which ignores the spirit of man and the possibilities of spiritual and moral development stored in it and awaiting the inspiration of a true Guru graciously seeking to free him from all the infecting and incriminating contacts of the flesh. Again, metaphors like those implied in the doctrine that "Death is the wages of sin" or that birth and death are diseases which can be got rid of by the curative process of imparting knowledge of eternal truths should not be taken literally, for, as the eternal *spirit* of man is, in its essential nature, free from all taint or corruption, we must necessarily hold that birth, disease, and



death and all the corruptions to which life in the world is subject can only be the attributes of our physical frame

We come at last to the Advaitic doctrine of the Vedanta. Here, we find the theory of Vicarious Atonement—whether in the Christian form of the transfer of the burdens of all human beings, *once for all*, to the shoulders of the Divine Incarnation, or in the more acceptable, logical, and practicable *Vaishnavo* form of *Nikshepo* (called also *Nyasa*) i.e., the placing of the burden of liberating each man on his own living *Achoryo* (or intercessor with God)—is altogether non-existent. The Advaitin, too accepts the need and even indispensability of an *Achorya*. It must be accepted, because common-sense, everyday experience, and the *Veda* too, teach us that the ignorant, struggling suffering, sinning soul wants an enlightener and helper to discover to him and guide him along the path to be followed in order to cross this seemingly shoreless ocean of *Samsaric* life of endless births and deaths. The *Veda*, in especial, assures us —“(Only) the person who has an *Acharya* can know (the Supreme Self)”. The *Acharya* is not only one who has learned the traditional teaching from his own teacher, and so on

in a line of succession leading up to the Creator, Himself, but through him also passes, in the same line of succession, and without any interruption, God's infinite mercy and grace which helps to enlighten the understandings of all who seek the blessing of redemption and the eternal bliss of self-realisation.

Both these form essential elements in the spiritual equipment of an *Acharya*, first, an inspiring and impressive personality capable of conveying the traditional teachings, in their speculative and practical aspects, second, the transmission of divine grace, flowing through him as through a conduit, and helping to make his work fruitful and truly enlightening. We may briefly dwell on these points: *First*, even in our secular education, it is our daily experience that, when the teacher possesses the gift of personality, the pupil rises at once above his old helplessness, indifference, or mediocrity, and displays a power of comprehension and advance which he never before possessed. The influence of personality is seen to be equally efficacious in the formation of character. The fact of personality, however mysterious, is indisputable. *Secondly*, the grace (*anugraha*) of God is, according to the

Vedanta, like a perennially flowing stream, and passes through a line of teachers each of whom, in his own turn, has been a disciple, and therefore, a recipient of the same. There is no difficulty in conceiving this direct transmission of divine help from teacher to pupil, for God is accepted as a pervading presence and personality seated in the hearts of all, and so can influence both teacher and disciple at the same time. There is no need to conceive it in the likeness of a stream flowing from one place to another, or of a dose of medicine given by a doctor to cure the disease of his patient. According to the Advaitic doctrine, there is but one soul only without a second, and it is only the beginningless ignorance due to its identification with *Maya* (i.e., matter nature) that has led to the perception of all the differences in the universe. The idea of unity or identity (*abhedā*) has also to be taken account of and realised in its true significance in comprehending how the divine grace is transmitted from the teacher to his chosen disciple. In the first place, it makes him perceive more clearly than ever before how his sinfulness and sensuality is only an attribute of his mental and material nature, and not of his spirit (*Atman* or self) which is—to use the language of the Upanishad—

*niranjanam paramam samyam*, "entirely untouched by evil and absolutely one." Man's disobedience of divine law only affects his mental and physical nature with sinfulness and sensuality, and not his innermost self, the spirit which is ever perfect and sinless. The Christian ideas of Fall and Redemption become clear and intelligible when we comprehend the Advaitic idea that sensuality and selfishness can only attach to the soul in its *fallen* condition, with all the limitations (bondages, *bandhas*) of which it is fully conscious in all the three states and conditions in life (*Avasthas*) known as *jagrat* (waking), *soapna* (dream), and *sushupti* (sleep). If our human self includes both *purusha* and *prakriti* (both *prakara* and *prakari*, nature and spirit), if it is only *akin* to the divine—it can never rise above the limitations which are imposed by nature (*prakriti*), and redemption from its complication with evil can only be a hopeless dream. Grace, however fully mediated, can never alter the essential composition of man's self which makes it liable to err and is ever speeding for a fall. Hence, its mingling with materiality, sensuality, and sinfulness must be conceived as due to a false super-imposition of, and consequent commingling with matter (and sense-objects) at a time of which

we can know nothing,—for the state of ignorance and the state of sinfulness have become mutually so much “implicated,” so to speak, and endured so long that purity of the Self has itself become impossible for us even to conceive. In fact, the very conception of purity is impossible without mind, and therefore, must be understood as due to the limitation of the Self by *prakṛiti*. Hence, the Advaitic doctrine conceives the Self in its absolute essence as free from both bondage and liberation, from both *bandha* and *mukti*. The Veda emphatically asserts this fact in the passage above quoted, viz., “*niranjanam paraman samyam*.” In the second place, divine grace augments the value and force of the efforts independently made by the disciple to attain to the purity of mind which is the essential preliminary to the shining experience of the Innermost Bliss of Love within the human understanding whose vision is now limited to the narrow range of the phenomenal world. Man is in truth only the one spirit, even as God is; but so long as he carries within his mind the corrupting effects of his contact with the world of matter, he can never cross the ocean of rebirth and sorrow which lies between him

and the unknown and unidentified Divinity of the Absoluté Self enshrined in his own heart.

The doctrine of redemption through a Mediator or Vicarious Atonement is now either ignored altogether or relegated to a position of unimportance by men of faith or culture everywhere. Every doctrine, whether old or new, has in these times to satisfy but one test, what moral or spiritual *value* attaches to the experience which it brings to humanity. The world is now fully awakened to the consideration that ignorance is the only source of sensuality, selfishness and sin, and he alone is a helper or mediator who can, *here and now*, lead us to the revelation and realisation of the Light of the Innermost Bliss of the Self that lightens up every human heart at its very entrance into the world.

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## · APPENDIX.

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## THE VEDANTA ON FREE-WILL AND NECESSITY.



HERE has been much controversy among European philosophical writers on the question whether man is, or is not, a free agent and how far men are responsible for the consequences of their actions. No psychologist or moralist has been able to ignore the question owing to the number and eminence of the writers who have addressed themselves to the solution of the problem. It will be interesting, therefore, to consider how Sri Sankaracharya has solved the problem for the Vedantin.

It will be well to begin by stating what are the points in dispute and their bearing on man's life and destiny. According to one school of thinkers, the Freewillists, only if man is a free agent free to do, or not to do, what he likes and as he likes,—



can he be held responsible for his actions. If he has not this freedom, but acts under any kind of necessity or compulsion, then all responsibility vanishes, and justly; and no man can be punished when he does wrong. Against those who hold this view, the doctrine of necessity has been advocated. Necessarians deny the existence of freedom in man as a fact and assert that it is merely the illusion of the unthinking mind, an illusion which will cease as soon as we consider the actual facts of the case and adopt rational methods of investigation. No man acts without a motive. A motive precedes and conditions all human acts. The motive is the cause, and the act follows as its effect. In the words of a Western writer, "No one ever supposes either that human actions arise without motive, or that the same motives operate differently in the same circumstances." A more powerful motive can counteract another less powerful; but, given the character of the motive, we can always predict man's conduct. There is, thus, no free will in man, and no exception here to the universality of the law of causation. The doctrine which maintains that men's actions are caused and determined by antecedently existing motives is known as Determinism.

This doctrine of necessity assumes other forms but they are not usually treated as philosophical for they are not understood to be based on the observation of facts and of the relations existing between them. They are supposed to be held as religious dogmas imposed by prophetic and ecclesiastical authorities on the minds and consciences of their faithful followers. The Moslem doctrine of Fatalism and the Christian doctrine of Election or Predestination will at once occur to all as instances of Dogmatic as distinguished from philosophical Necessitarianism. In both cases man's actions are regarded as altogether controlled and determined by the agency of God, man's actions are neither free nor caused by motives; he must therefore give up all illusions, place his trust in God, fulfil his mission in life in the way God chooses to decide and accept the destiny that is in store for him.

There are many who suppose that the belief in the law of Karma—which is meant to be the basis and beginning of Indian spirituality and which while it is gradually losing its hold in India some queer people with enigmatic ways of life are vainly endeavouring to introduce into Christian countries—is destructive of human freedom and converts man into

a machine deftly manipulated by some irresistible power outside or inside him. Nor can it be denied that, either owing to the natural tendency in unguarded man to allow rational beliefs and practices to degenerate into contrary ones or to the close contact of the Hindus with the fatalistic creed of Islam for a thousand years, some of them have practically become fatalists and believe firmly in the degrading doctrine which denies human freedom. Moreover, there exist what Sri Sankaracharya denounces as *Yuktyabhasa* (fallacious arguments) and *Vakyaabhasa* (Scriptural passages torn from their context and cruelly misunderstood) by means of which impostors have the power to impose upon unwary people and are enabled to create a following for themselves and set up as founders or propagators of new religious creeds and sects. There are many circumstances in modern society which are calculated to bring about a strange admixture or perversion of beliefs among men of all countries. It is with a view to prevent this misfortune that the sages of the Holy Land have always advised their followers to stick to their own *Sampradaya* or tradition, regardless of the siren charms of eloquence and personality.

What, then, is the traditional doctrine on the present question? As the Vedanta system of Śrī Sankaracharya is understood even by Western writers 'to mark a strictly orthodox reaction against all combinations of non Vedic elements of belief and doctrine with the teachings of the Upanishads', we believe it will be of some interest to consider what that system has to say regarding this long standing controversy

The technical word for free will in the Vedanta system is *Karitr̥tvam*. Has man *Karitr̥tvam*, or free will? The answer is that the conditioned soul or Jivatman has this freedom of the will, but of the conditionless or pure self—the Absolute, the One existence—we cannot assert that it has freedom, activity, or any other attribute of man's material organism bodily or mental. Where we postulate only one existence and no other, evidently there can be no object for the exercise of the will or activity. The triplicity of agent, object and activity is essential to the assertion of the concept of freedom. If there can be no freedom there is also no necessity, for the noumenal Atman—the One only without a second—transcends the relation of cause and effect. All questions of *How*, *Why* and *Wherefore* relate

to the world of phenomena and must be entirely discarded when we reach the height of the one Absolute Existence.

Now, then, is the will of the Jivatman—the soul in condition—free, or bound by the universal law of causation? Three problems offer themselves for solution here. *First*, on what grounds is the will of the Jiva free according to the Vedantin? *Secondly*, does this freedom of will stultify the over-ruling providence of an almighty, allwise, and just personal God which the Advaitin postulates equally with Vedantins of other schools so long as the Jiva and his world of sense exist—that is, so long as the Jiva has not attained to the realisation of the One self without a second? *Thirdly*, what are the functions of the personal God as ruler and director of the universe?

Before we enter on the exposition of the Vedanta doctrine on the subject, it is necessary to premise that the doctrines of Karma and reincarnation which are common to all forms of the Vedanta are chiefly responsible for the differences which distinguish the views here propounded from those which are enunciated in European philosophical works

treating of the subject We shall, in explaining the Indian doctrine, generally follow the lead given by our Acharya, and also avail ourselves of the opportunity arising in the course of the discussion to point out how our doctrines of Karma and re incarnation produce variations in the Indian point of view and distinguish the Indian from the European conceptions of free will and necessity

In the *first* place, if man's will is not free, it is clear that morality and law must cease to have any significance for him Especially in the Hindu Scriptures, there is an elaborate code of morality and ritual varying according to Varnas and Asramas Dharma is a word of peculiar significance to every true hearted Hindu It is a word peculiar to India,—for we believe that Dharma is an entity which he who has developed the vision and the faculty divine can sense within his inner world just as with his physical organ of vision man perceives the objects of the external world Even in this halage men are not wanting to whom Dharma and Brahman are realities, and not simply the fictions invented—and the fetters forged—by a clever, selfseeking arrogant, rascally hierarchy of priests and divines for the perpetuation of its

selfish dominance over the ignorant, misguided and gullible millions of a populace peculiarly amenable to the bondage of the spirit. If the ancient people of India can claim alone to have discovered and developed a spirituality which is unknown to the rest of the world, it is because their ideals and standards of conduct in life and beyond are dominated by these two conceptions, or realities, of Dharma and Brahman. Here is the essential difference between the ethics of the Indian civilisation and the ethics of the West. Among western nations, ethical standards are based either on economic and utilitarian motives, in which case only they have what may be called a rational aim,—or they are based purely and solely on authority, in which case men, even the best and noblest, allow their will to be constrained without asking, or knowing, why. Where these influences do not act upon man's will, there remain only those which act equally upon man and the lower animals—the responsiveness of like organisms to similar external stimuli or to suggestions from like organisms, the readiness existing in men and animals to imitate like selves, and the higher stage of feeling known as consciousness of kind which has developed social

organs of action and sensation is a matter under the Jiva's controlling choice. Of course, there are the *Vasanas* or *Samskaras* (tendencies) stored up in the Jiva's mind which the Jiva carries with him as a burden or privilege from birth to birth. These stored-up tendencies of our ante-natal experience certainly influence our activities and choices of all kinds, and this unquestionable fact seems to favour the theory of determinism and to militate against the existence of freedom. But two circumstances must be borne in mind in this connexion. As these *Samskaras* are merely *tendencies* towards certain kinds of activity, they can be counteracted or modified by cultivating tendencies having a reverse direction. The Indian philosophers of the Yoga school maintain the possibility and the ethical efficiency of cultivating what they call *Pratipaksha-bhāvanas*,—feelings and emotions favourable to activities which counteract the tendencies, inherited or other, which have a more unethical or less ethical direction and aim than those which have newly come within the scope and purview of the Jiva's knowledge. In the next place, the European determinists entirely discard or ignore these ante-natal *Samskaras* and only take into account the motives which refer to



the experiences in this birth. The Indian idea of an organised store of Samskaras is perfectly consistent with a theory of determinism which is in accordance with the teachings of the Veda, but not with the theory as it is held by European philosophers. The Indian doctrine is perfectly consistent with the scientific principle of the uniformity of nature, for the human will is determined both by the Samskaras which the Jiva brings with him as well as by the contrary tendencies which can be cultivated anew in this birth. It does not also contradict the European doctrine of the freedom of the will for it recognises the possibility and even the duty and necessity in the interest of a higher standard of morality of cultivating new and higher impulses which are within man's reach.

Thirdly and lastly, the phenomena of dream clearly indicate the existence of the Jiva's *Kortritva* or freedom of will. There the Jiva lives a life of enjoyment or activity independent not of the antenatal store of Samskaras already referred to, but of all the ordinary and known antecedents of the waking life. Hence this dream-life may be put forward as a clear demonstration of freedom as understood by European writers. No doubt it may

be argued that dream—experiences are simply a reflection of the impressions of the waking state which are stored up in man's nervous system. But these impressions do not explain all the phenomena experienced in the state of dream. There is clearly an unexplained residuum which either goes to the credit of the Jiva's freedom, or—what is almost the same thing—can only be satisfactorily explained as due to the store of ante-natal Samskaras, which according to the Veda, every Jiva brings with him when he enters upon this stage of existence.

It must be borne in mind that, when we thus establish the freedom of the Jivatman in relation to man's purely naturalistic or Scripturally-prescribed Dharmic activities, we distinguish the intelligent personality of the Jiva from the purely material and unintelligent organ of his bodily frame which is known as Manas or Buddhi and which he uses in obtaining a knowledge of the world of matter and mind to which he has become related. Of course, in the ultimate resort, there are only two categories of existence—the Noumenon or the Atman, and the Phenomenon or the conditioned world of mind and matter which ceases when the realisation of the Jiva as the Noumenal Atman is attained. From this

ultimate view-point the Jiva and the Atman are one and the same, and the mind or buddhi is simply a developed phase or part of the world of matter which is superposed on, and is falsely regarded as reality of the same order as, the pure and un-conditioned Atman. But so long as this height of Self-realisation is not reached, the conditioned Jiva must be regarded as different from the unconditioned Atman and from the material world—external and internal—which brings to us this positing of a conditioned Jiva and its differentiation from the rest of the universe and from an Isvara who is the supreme lord, creator and sustainer of the universe.

Now comes in the consideration of the question how the views, herein expressed regarding the Jiva's freedom of will are reconcilable with the doctrine of a providential ordering of the course of nature and man. All schools of Vedantins believe not only in the existence of a personal God, but in his directing dispensation—in his *Karaitritiam*, to use the technical term of our philosophers. There are also some passages in the Upanishads which declare that the Jiva is under the complete control of (Isvara) as, for example, "He (Isvara) makes him whom he wishes to lead up from these worlds do a good deed ; and

the same makes him whom he wishes to lead down from these worlds do a bad deed" (Kaushitaki—Upanishad III. 8.) That would make man absolutely dependent on the Lord, and altogether destroy his freedom. In what sense, then, is Isvara's directing agency (*Karaitritvam*) in regard to man to be understood, and how is it consistent with the Vedantic conception of human freedom as above explained ?

The answer is that Isvara's directing agency and the Jiva's dependence on him are due to the following circumstances. Isvara is the creator of the universe,—(i.e.,) he alone has the power of bringing the universe into manifestation from the state of non-manifestation or *Pralaya*. He also permeates and sustains the universe while in manifestation, and he is also the giver of the fruits of man's activities in his various births. Though the divine function of creation and the divine dispensation of fruits always have to be consonant with men's activities severally or in combination, still it is Isvara who, as both the material and the efficient cause of the universe, makes existence possible for man and enables him to work for the accomplishment of his destiny ; and it is he who has to confer on man the fruits he has earned by his activities and holds them in his control. Man desires

these fruits, and he also adopts various suitable courses of activity. It is this desire and will on his part and the activities to which they lead that form man's contribution and determine his fate and fortune in life after life. Now the question arises,—Are these human desires and wills independent of Isvara's directing agency? In one sense they are dependent, in another they are independent. The Vedanta accounts for the Jiva's dependence on Isvara in the following manner. In the *first* place without Isvara's sustaining and all pervading power, there can be no universe and no man. In the *second* place, Isvara alone has the function of declaring, by means of the Vedas, for the enlightenment and guidance of the human understanding the distinction between Dharma and Adharma—Right and Wrong. According to the Vedanta—and according, in fact, to all schools of Indian theism—man cannot, by his unaided understanding, distinguish between what is truly right and truly wrong. Indian philosophical and religious thought has never swerved from its firm belief that the divine command as revealed in the Vedas can alone form the source of man's knowledge of right and wrong. India has never accepted or enunciated an intuitional, utilitarian, evolutionary, or emotional

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thence gained creates in us the desire for good and aversion to evil. Hence arise the will and activity which are finally to lead us to the goal of self realisation. Such will and activity are also dependent not only on the Samskaras left behind in the mind of man by the aspiration and effort after Dharma in successive births in the past course of the Jiva's evolution but also on the effort to counteract those Samskaras, where necessary, by setting up Pratipakshabhavanas or contrary tendencies of superior efficacy in producing higher forms of virtue. The Vedanta is thus the reconciler of the conflict of ages between the rival doctrines of free will and determinism and it also avoids the seeming inconsistency between the view which makes man a free agent and the doctrine which insists on the overruling providence of a Supreme God and makes the Jiva his abject slave. The following verses of the Bhagavad Gita (VII 21, 22) may be appropriately quoted in this connection and if deeply pondered over, will establish for all minds enlightened by divine faith much of what has been put forth in the course of the above argumentation —

Whichsoever aspirant being filled with faith and being also my bhakta, desireth to worship whichsoever of my divine forms—in such an aspirant I

theory of ethics. Our knowledge of man's social institutions, past and present, conclusively proves to us that practical human morality, wherever it has developed itself without the aid of revelation, has varied infinitely and that these variations have brought human society only an immense amount of conflict, trouble, distrust and disaster. The Vedas, then, are accepted by all Hindus as the source of our knowledge of right and wrong. Isvara first revealed the Vedas to Brahma, and he to the rest of mankind through the Guru-parampara or succession of teachers. There may be also other Guru-paramparas as, for instance, the one given in the Gita. Man has to depend on God for his knowledge of what is truly right and wrong, and it is by revealing this knowledge that God chiefly performs his function as the director of man's activities on earth. The Vedas form the divine revelation so far as the chosen people of the Holy Land are concerned. No doubt there are other revelations and dispensations of God to other men and peoples. But to us—His chosen people, and spiritually the most perfected of mankind, as we are declared to be by our sacred books—the Vedas form the source of our knowledge of good and evil. The knowledge



which are known as *agami-karma*—he is responsible, and they go to establish his freedom of the will. Even as regards *Prarabda-karma* and their fruits, the Vedantins of the Advaita school hold that they can be frustrated or destroyed. They hold that it is possible to attain to the uninterrupted practical realisation of the unity of the Self even while one is living this life on earth,—that we can destroy our sense experience of the variety of the universe and entirely prevent their recurrence. Ordinarily, *Nididhyasana* or the practice of Yoga which, in its final stage of development, brings in the realisation of the Self is liable to interruption by our ordinary routine of duties as a member of the family and of society. Therefore those who have realised the unity of the Atman and do not wish to have a recurrence of the bondage of sense-perceptions—those who, in the technical language of the Vedanta—philosophers, wish, like the sage Yajnavalkya, to attain to *Jivan Mukti*—have to cut themselves off from home and social life and resolve to practise *Samyama* (or *Dhyana*) without interruption and this again implies the existence of free will in man. Vidyaranya Swami and Madhusudana Sarasvati have declared that such unceasing spiritual endeavour leads to the dissolution

make faith firm and unflinching. Possessed of the faith thus confirmed in him by me, he perseveres in worshipping that divine form and obtains through that form the blessings desired by him—these being ordained and apportioned as the due Karmaphala (fruits of right action) by me alone as the omniscient Lord of the Universe."

It is well, also, to look at the present question from another standpoint. According to the Vedānta philosophy, Karma is divided into two classes:—  
 (a) those activities which, forming a part of the organised store of past Karmas, have now got to yield their fruits, sweet and bitter, and have brought to the Jiva his present incarnation to enable him to undergo his experiences of pleasure and pain;  
 (b) the fresh activities to which the Jiva is impelled in this present incarnation. The Jiva can have no manner of control over the former (technically known as Prarabha karma). They bring in no fresh responsibilities for the Jiva and their fruits are forced on him against his will. The Jiva has only to be a passive witness, sufferer and enjoyer of the fruits of these enforced activities. But for those endeavours of his which are the outcome of his present impulses and aspirations, worldly and other—worldly,—and

## THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL HELL IN INDIA.



FROM the time of Justin Martyr who was among the earliest of Christian apologists and theologians and who declared his belief that "all who live wickedly, and do not repent, will be punished in

eternal fire"—on through Augustine and Luther—down to the modern time with its casuistical distinction of "hypothesis" and "thesis," the doctrine of an eternal punishment for the denial of faith in Christ and non repentance for such denial has been accepted as one of the cardinal points of the Christian religion and Church. Much contempt and indignation have been directed against both for their advocacy of this doctrine. That the soul of man, however great its fall, should be left without hope of redemption marks the faith of which

of the mind and the destruction of all its latent Samskaras. When the mind of man is dissolved, neither pain nor pleasure can any longer be felt. All sense-perceptions cease, and there is no more return to the bondage of existence. This is Kaivalya even in life, which no words can describe, no thought can realise. There is then neither knower, nor object known, nor the act of knowing. "I am I,"—*Aham—eva—aham*.

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in error and are not prepared to bow down before his own revealed God. All founded religions are fundamentally and mischievously intolerant, aggressive, and propagandistic ; all have accepted toleration as a fundamental principle of state policy ; all consign non-believers to Eternal Hell.

In India we have no founded religions. Our religions have been called *national* by some writers, but really they are not,—for India has never yet been a nation, in any sense of the word, ancient, mediæval, or modern. Hinduism claims to be the religion of the most *spiritually advanced* section of the human race—those who are born within the four castes. We do not concern ourselves with the beliefs of others, for all men must in the fulness of time and spiritual development take their birth in the Holy Land and its four castes and so work out their Karma and rise to spiritual perfection. Every man is the architect of his own spiritual fate. Every one rises or falls by his own will and choice, and so no one needs to be coerced or converted by the threat of eternal damnation for not sharing our own views and beliefs. All are wayfarers towards one and the same goal. Some are more advanced than

it forms part and parcel as a gospel of despair and heartlessness,—though it produces in those of its votaries who can bring themselves to believe in their own assured or predestined safety a mass of aggressive energy which might result in their own predominance or the degradation of others. It is difficult to believe that the so-called Prince of Peace should have taught so dangerous and obnoxious a doctrine: but it has formed a part of the religion which bears his name. The advance of modern humanitarian feeling has produced a gentler and more refined spirit in the minds of all who have really come under its influence. Still they only *tolerate* other creeds. They are not prepared to feel that the minds of those whose beliefs differ from their own can to any extent be ennobled or enlightened by the living spirit of truth. The principle of toleration has been found to serve as a political force making for social peace and harmony. But it has not lessened to any appreciable extent the hatred of man for man, or of creed for creed. The enlightened modern Christian, no less than the enlightened Moslem or Buddhist, seeks to propagate his faith, for he believes that all other systems of faith are erroneous and has to consign to *Eternal Hell* all who believe

v 20 —“Having fallen into Asura wombs and been deluded in every life, never attaining to Me, O Kunti's son, they go to the lowest depths ”

Mr. Subba Row's comment on v 19 is as follows —“As stated in verse 16, they fall not only into hell but they go to the hell of eternal damnation after having been for a while in the cycle of samsara ” His comment on verse 20 is —“Lowest depths eternal hell.” From all this it is clear that the Madhvas hold the doctrine of Eternal Hell So the doctrine is not one gifted to India for the first time by the missionaries and apostles of Christ

In connection with this Indian doctrine of Eternal Hell, a few points are worth consideration *First*, Is it reasonable? *Secondly* Do any condemned souls eternally reside in Hell or simply to undergo punishment for sins? *Thirdly*, what have the Vedantins who follow Sri Sankaracharya to say in regard to this question? We propose to make a few remarks in elucidation of these points

In the *first* place, if the idea of an Eternal Heaven be held true and reasonable, why should not that of an Eternal Hell be held equally so?

others ; but all are on the road towards the vision of freedom from the bondage of sin and sensuality.

But, have we in India, or have we not, a doctrine of Eternal Hell? If we have, how is the doctrine held? The Madhvas believe in Eternal Hell on the authority of the Bhagavad-gita, Chap. XVI, verses 16, 19 and 20. In this chapter, men are divided into two classes, those of Deva nature and those of Asura nature. The above three verses speak of the latter, their aims, activities and fate. It is in this connection that the Madhvas postulate their doctrine of eternal hell. Mr. S. Subba Rao, M. A., the learned editor, translator and interpreter of Sri Madhvacharya's religion in this Presidency, translates these verses as follows:—

v. 16.—“Bewildered by many such nations, enveloped in the meshes of delusion, immersed in the enjoyment of pleasures they fall into the hell of abomination.”

v. 19.—“Haters of cruel purpose, the worst of human beings, the evil natured—I always cast them into *Samsaras* (cycles of birth and death) and only into Asura wombs”



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Not only Christians and others, but Saivites and Vaishnavites and others in India, believe in the existence of an Eternal Heaven in which the Lord of the Universe resides and to which the faithful go when released from the world as the fruit of their constancy in faith and virtue. If the human spirit can soar to the measureless altitudes of beatific perfection, why should it be thought irrational to hold that it can, like Satan, also fall to the fathomless depths of sin and perdition? Also, if as reward for goodness and constancy in faith during a limited period of time, Iswara can bestow the perfection of bliss during an unlimited period of time, it cannot be held wrong to hold that Eternal Hell is the reward for persistence in evil modes of living and thinking during a fixed period of time. There is no use importing preconceived notions and feelings into the matter. If God can and ought to reward the good, he can and ought equally to punish the guilty. The mere duration of either reward or punishment can make no change in the character or conception of God, for such duration depends on the merit or guilt of man and on man's inherent capacity for reform or persistence in evil.

*Secondly*, has hell any *permanent* residents besides those sent thither to suffer for their sins? Of course we here leave out of consideration those that may be set in authority over the inmates of hell. In the Kathopanishad Yama, the ruler of hell, is said to have imparted divine wisdom to Nachiketas. And Yama is said to have Chitragupta and others as subordinates to do his bidding. Let us, therefore, take into account only those for whom residence in hell is meant as a penalty for sin and sensuality. If these are only sent thither to suffer for their sinful past, then they could not have lived there during that past, and so it is impossible that they can be *Nitya narakis*, permanent residents of hell. Then who are these permanent inmates of whom the Madhvas make so much? The conception, however, cannot be ridiculed so long as we can believe in the existence in Heaven of *Nitya suris*, eternally blessed souls. Both Vaishnavas and Saivas believe in the existence of such souls, and Christians and others have also a similar conception. Some Indian sacred authorities can also be certainly quoted in support of it. Our contention, then, is that if there are *Nitya suris*, there can be no inherent absurdity in the correlative conception of *Nitya narakis*. And

those who believe in an eternal heaven and an eternal hell cannot be blamed for also believing them to be eternally inhabited.

Lastly, we enquire into the position taken up by Sri Sankaracharya and his followers. To them all embodied existence—all worlds above and below and all contained in them—have only a phenomenal and transient existence. There is only one reality unconditioned by time, place and circumstance. They make a distinction between *lokabuddhi* and *sastra-buddhi*,—the mind which believes in the reality of the world of the senses and that which, instructed by the traditional teachings and the Sadguru, is liberated from the bondage of the flesh and has realised the one self. The one self alone is without *pariccheda*, or limitation. There are three kinds of *pariccheda*—*desa-pariccheda* (limitation in place), *Kala-pariccheda* (limitation in time), and *Vastu-pariccheda* (co-existence of objects). The one self—the Atman—has none of these limitations. When it is once realised, there is no other object or existence, known or unknown. The realisation of the Atman does not mean knowledge in the ordinary sense of the word, for such knowledge implies the existence of a triplicity—the knower the

known and the act of knowledge. Nor is it merely Sir William Hamilton's "faith without science," a mere intellectual recognition and emotional acceptance by man of the source of his being,—for such recognition and acceptance can bear as little fruit in the shape of practical realisation as the merely intellectual or emotional denial of absolute existence by the agnostic who has failed to seek or find such a faith. It is spoken of as *Kavalya*—alone news. It is incapable of being known (*agrahya*) and it is indefinable (*anirdesya*). It can only be described by negatives, but is itself not a negation. It cannot be negated, for negation itself is impossible without its being postulated. As Sri Sankaracharya puts it, 'it is the very self of him who negates it' and so negation of any kind is impossible without its existence and its acceptance as a fundamental postulate. Truly does the Brhad-Aranyaka Upanishad declare, 'even the Devas have no power to make the self non-existent'. Without its support, life, thought and activity are not possible. Some may deny the existence of Isvara. There have always been atheists—in India and elsewhere. And Mr Collier Morrison informs us about Modern Europe that "an anthropological God is the only

God whom men can worship, and also the God whom modern thought finds it increasingly difficult to believe in." But these Atheists and thinkers—modern or other—cannot deny the existence of the Atman (self), for without the Atman they must cease to be themselves. The Atman is, as the Kena-Upanishad declares, "the ear of ear, the mind of mind, the speech of speech, the prana of prana, the eye of eye." "What none sees by the eye, whereby seeing is seen; what none hears with the ear, whereby hearing is heard, what none thinks with the mind, whereby thinking is thought," etc. The Sastras, i.e., the Vedas—the Upanishads, especially—are the source of our knowledge of the Atman, and they must be learned not by ourselves, but from the traditionally-trained teachers—those who know the *Sampradaya*, tradition. In his *Bhashya* on the *Bṛihad-Aranyaka-Upanishad*, Sri Sankaracharya says:—"Those only attain to the farther limit of Avidya whose knowledge accords with the traditions unfolded by the *Śruti* and the *Acharya*. They only cross this fathomless ocean of *Moha*, not the others who follow the independent revelations of their own minds." All reasoning except that which supports the tradition,—the *Anukula-tarka*, as it is called, that

taught by the Guru—must be abandoned. The practice of meditation (*yoga*) as taught by the Guru must be resorted to daily and hourly until realisation (*Kaivalya*) is reached, and all doubts and troubles vanish for him who has reached true enlightenment. Such meditation is taught in the *Yoga Sāstra* and it results in the restraint of all modifications or *vrittis* of the mind-stuff and the dissolution of the mind-stuff (*manolaya*) into the causal and primordial matter of which it is a mere manifestation. The world will continue for others whose minds are not similarly enlightened and dissolved, but ceases for him who has realised the Atman. This is what the Upanishads intend to teach when they assert that there is only one existence—the Atman—and naught else.

It is from this point of view that Vedantins declare that neither Heaven nor Hell can partake of the character of real, eternal, and absolute existence. We too, speak—and believe in the existence—of *Nitya suris*, and we may, in a similar sense, believe in, or speak of *Nitya Narakis* though, as a matter of fact, we do not. But the word *Nitya*, used in this connection, does not mean *aparicchinna*, unlimited Noumenal, existence, but only existence for a far longer period than the life of men on earth or

of other souls in other spheres of existence. Even Isvara, the creator and sustainer of the universe, ceases to exist for him who has realised the Atman,—for the Atman is one only, and there is no other existence for him who has realised it. To assume the possibility of such an existence would be to condition what is beyond all condition. The Atman is pure, and has been eternally pure. It never *becomes* pure; it is always pure. It has neither bondage nor liberation. The ideas of sin, bondage and freedom relate to the limited world of experience, and they are superimposed on the self by the *buddhi* or mind of the man who is ignorant of what he is in truth. There is in reality neither hell nor heaven,—nothing but the Atman. If we cannot realise it, if we do not successfully and in a practical manner convince ourselves of it, by the known processes of ratiocination, it is our own fault. The teacher is always available for him who seeks him in all truth and sincerity. He who has not the necessary qualifications of a true disciple cannot complain if he does not find what he cannot find, what he is unfit to find. Every thing comes to every man in the fulness of time; and this is as true in the world of spiritual experience as in the ordinary daily life.